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A Reformed Weekly

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53rd Ye... July 3, 1998 No. 2581 $1.07

Reformed agencies reflect on their place in a changing world

BERT WITVOET PHOTOS

There were times to relax. From l. to r.: Ary de Moor, Elaine Botha and John Hiemstra.

Bert Witvoet

BOLTON Ont. — The Reformed community has long been known for its propensity to build institutions and organizations for a variety of purposes: education, labor, justice, relief work, mental health and farming.

Organizations addressing these areas of society were spawned by Dutch Reformed immigrants to Canada during the influx of those immigrants after the Second World War. It should not come as a surprise, therefore, that 30 or 40 years later a conference would focus on the topic "Reformed Institutions in Transition." Just such a conference took place from June 11-13 at the Cedar Glen Conference Centre in Bolton, Ont.

Nearly 50 people, most of them leaders representing such groups as the Christian Labour Association (CLAC), Citizens for Public Justice (CPJ), the Institute for Christian Studies (ICS), the Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario (CFFO), Redeemer and The King's colleges, the Christian school societies in Ontario and British Columbia, and two mental health groups met to discuss how to carry on amid changing times and changing faces.

A sign of changing faces is the recent or imminent retirement of a number of the leaders who helped build these organizations. Some of these, like Harry Antonides, Calvin Seerveld and Gerald Vandezande, reminisced about the early days of CLAC and CPJ.

But more importantly perhaps was the realization that we live in a different world and that Generation X, for example, has a different take than their parents and grandparents on what is important and what is dispensable.

Louis Tamminga, retired director of Christian Reformed Pastor-Church Relations of Grand Rapids, Mich., and former pastor and social activist in Canada, began with a historical overview of the vision that drove early immigrants to establish Christian organizations.

"Incredible things for the Lord" were done, he said, but a *vision* tends to become a *mind construct* and, thus, a subtle change takes place from a close walk with God to a "triumphalistic" spirit. The "antithesis," which points to a battle between the two kingdoms of

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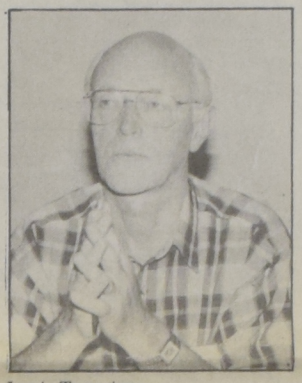

Louis Tamminga

Freed from prison

Pakistani pastor starts new ministry in Canada

Alan Doerksen

WATERDOWN, Ont. — "There is no religious freedom at all" in Pakistan, says Arthur Salim. He knows because he has been imprisoned there for his faith. Even now, to avoid problems back home for his fellow Christians, he does not want a picture taken of himself or his family.

Six months ago, Salim and his family came to Canada secretly with the help of Christian Reformed sponsors. He and his family are now adjusting to life in a culture very different from the one they left. But that has not prevented Salim from developing a new ministry in Canada.

Until late last year, Salim and his family were living near Lahore, Pakistan, where Salim was doing church-planting work with the Pentecostal Faith Church of Pakistan, which he founded.

But since June 1997, Salim and his oldest son, Reuben, had suffered physical abuse from police and from Muslims opposed to their work. The Salims were falsely accused of harboring a girl named Rahilah, the daughter of a Muslim family, who had shown an interest in

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"The Ultimate Sacrifice"
A summer story
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Help a child read

Genetic engineering
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Buddhist family baptized in Christ
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Reformed agencies enter new era

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God and Satan, was sometimes used as a propaganda tool in those early decades.

"The 60s was a decade of protest and irreverence ... but a pastoral spirit has returned to the churches," said Tamminga. "We must mirror the new humanity through personal piety," he added.

Tamminga called for earnest reflection and sacrificial scholarship. And because of the immense amount of evil and suffering in the world, the Christian community must act as if in a state of emergency as it addresses the symptoms as well as the causes.

The youth culture

Peter Schuurman, Christian Reformed chaplain at Brock University in St. Catharines, Ont., portrayed the youth culture as an image-based culture that adores diversity and looks for emotional rather than intellectual responses.

For these people, "life is episodic and seminal events are media events," said Schuurman. Packaging is important in such a consumers' world. Young Reformed people thus feel alienated in their faith community which emphasizes commitment and systematic approaches.

Tricia Wind, who works with the policy team at the Canadian Council for International Cooperation in Ottawa, wondered if being Reformed was really more than integrating your faith with your life. She and her generation prize honesty, global awareness and the willingness to be engaged, she said.

As for a youth strategy, she recommended the following:

* Tell us what you're doing;
* Link what you do to the Kingdom vision with passion;
* Be prepared for tough questions;
* Acknowledge difficulties, dilemmas;
* Don't assume that youth have all the energy and answers — "We're not the future. Together we are the present";
* Expect a fair bit of resentment over past problems.

A different spirit

Presenters like Bill Van Groningen, CRC chaplain at Queen's University in Kingston, Ont., said that coherence and cohesion is not what today's students are after. "No one thing will answer the question of how to connect." Students, instead, look for "stories that dance with the edge of mystery."

Henk Hart of the Institute for Christian Studies, urged members of the Reformed community to shed ethnic and denominational stereotyping and to seek a worldview that places us in the darkest places in the world where there is the most suffering.

Hart said the Bible does not provide us with timeless principles. But "we should work today with the principles the Spirit gives us."

The awareness of having entered a different time was a constant theme. Ed Pypker, research and education director for CLAC, said that we cannot repeat the history of visionary leaders in a time of unprecedented prosperity and technology. "There will not be another Dirk Hoogendoorn (he took on the United Steel Workers in the '70s by refusing to join that union). Many people today prefer a Promise Keepers rally to a CLAC rally. Pypker said that an organization's third generation either goes stale or renews its vision.

BERT WITVOET

Laptop consultation: from l. to r., Henry Eygenraam, Andrew Brouwer, Bruce Voogd and Harry Kits.

Gerald Vandezande of CPJ asserted that "unless we concretize our confessions, the world has every right to ignore our confessional exclamations." In response to those who wondered how the torch could be passed to the next generation, he stated that "no one person holds the torch, but all God's people are torchbearers."

Towards the end, Gayla Postma, a freelance journalist who had been asked to report on the conference, summed up some of the themes that had emerged as important considerations for Reformed institutions: Create a wider and more diverse leadership; Get expert help; Live out of what it means to be Reformed; Tell people what you're doing; Dare to think small and try pilot projects; Pay attention to people and to process; Increase collaboration with others.

Participants at Bolton conference positive about the future

Bert Witvoet

BOLTON, Ont. — Peter Vander Meulen, co-ordinator of the Christian Reformed Church's Social Justice and Hunger Action, "deeply enjoyed listening to the history and stories of the early leaders such as Louis Tamminga, Gerald Vandezande, Cal Seerveld, Harry Antonides and Henk Hart."

Vander Meulen admitted, "I knew of them by name and reputation only. I knew nothing of the passion and force with which these men worked and fought — and the deep bonds and wounds that had been created over the years."

Deeply committed

As for the future, Vander Meulen saw no young leaders who would "devote their life to the propagation and defence of the *Reformed* system of belief." But he did see a group of younger leaders who were "deeply committed to acting with force and passion as *Christians* in society."

Vander Meulen isn't worried, however, that those younger Christians will lose their Reformed heritage all that easily. "What's so important about being Reformed?" he asks. "This generation of leaders, I think, needs to find that out for itself. And they will answer that question in the context of collaborative Christian ministry. What could be better?"

Nourishment from roots

Judy Cook, clinical director of Salem Christian Mental Health Association, enjoyed "listening to and interacting with others who have a shared vision of what our Reformed heritage has meant in the past, and can mean for the future."

She did not expect the conference to go beyond what was accomplished — "that is, exploring our common roots and seeing how these roots can continue to provide nourishment to a Christian expression and consciousness of the various agencies for the future. The challenge is to make that overt and concrete."

Cook thought it a positive first step to focus on the definition and use of the term Reformed. "It seems that this word is being replaced by phrases such as 'faith for all of life' or 'integration of belief and work,'" she observed.

Discerning the spirits

Roy Berkenbosch, dean of students at The King's University College, thought it was good to hear from other organizations how they are functioning and managing transitions. "The nostalgic moments were there and needed to be; it was important to acknowledge our history (to the extent it is shared). But now that it's been done, I doubt we need to do it again."

Berkenbosch thought the participants were "mostly (and uncharacteristically) uncritical of abandoning Reformed jargon and labels."

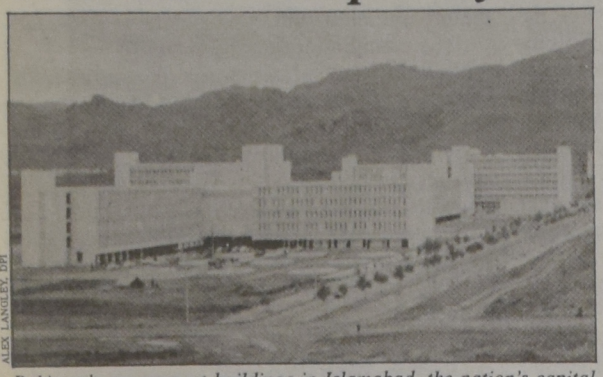
But transition is more than exercising different organizational and management strategies, he says. "It has to do with discerning the spirits of the age and discovering the biblical message anew. We should've spent some time talking not only about pop culture as a way of defining today's youth, but also about trends in the contemporary church and how our institutions relate to that body."

Berkenbosch was impressed by the level of discussion, the breadth of concerns addressed, the quality of conference organization, the obvious presence of God's spirit among the conferees and the potential that was revealed for further collaboration.

Voortman

Over 40 Varieties of Fine Cookies

Pastor condemns Pakistan's blasphemy law



ALEX LANGLEY, DPI

Pakistan's government buildings in Islamabad, the nation's capital. Pastor Arthur Salim urges Canadians to put pressure on Pakistan's government to change its blasphemy law.

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Christianity.

Arthur and Reuben Salim were both beaten and imprisoned because of the false accusation. Finally, Rahilah was discovered at a women's halfway house and was reunited with her family. Later, her own brother murdered her (see CC, Dec. 12, 1997).

Arie Van Eek, recently retired executive secretary of the Council of Christian Reformed Churches in Canada, worked with others at his office to help the Salims come safely and discreetly to Canada. Canada allowed the Salims into the country with an Immigration Minister's permit, says Van Eek. The family has applied for permanent resident status.

Since December, the Salim family of nine — Arthur Salim, his wife, mother and six children — have been living in Waterdown, Ont., near Hamilton. Their house is rented for them by the Christian Reformed World Relief Committee (CRWRC), explains Erick Schuringa, pastor of Bethel Christian Reformed Church in Waterdown, where the Salims have been attending. The church's youth leader lives in another part of the home, which is owned by church members.

Although the Salim family attend Bethel, Schuringa explains that Arthur Salim has been working with Asian congregations in Toronto and more recently in the Hamilton area. When at Bethel, Salim often prays that Pakistan's blasphemy law will be repealed, says Schuringa.

That law has allowed opponents of Christianity the opportunity to sentence Christians to death for "blasphemy" against Mohammed or the Koran. The law reads: "Whoever by words, either spoken, or written, or by visible representation, or by any imputation, innuendo, or insinuation, directly or indirectly defiles the sacred name of the Holy Prophet ... shall be punished with death, or imprisonment, and shall also be liable to fine."

Blasphemy law 'most dangerous'

Although Pakistan technically has religious freedom, "practically, there is no freedom at all," asserts Salim. "The most dangerous law for Christians is the blasphemy law."

Salim is disturbed that Canada's press has paid little attention to persecution of Christians in Pakistan, preferring to focus on the nuclear rivalry between Pakistan and India. The press needs to wake up to the crisis faced by Pakistani Christians, he says. "We need to raise awareness." The persecution of Christians in Pakistan is not new, but dates back to "since Pakistan came into existence 50 years ago," he explains.

Salim asks for two things from Canadian Christians who want to help their brothers and sisters in Pakistan. "First of all, we need prayer. Secondly, we have to ask our government to set specific conditions" for sending aid to Pakistan. The Canadian government should put pressure on Pakistan to change its blasphemy law, he insists.

"I'm working as a pastor in Brampton," says Salim. "I started a new fellowship." The new church is called the Hamilton Asian Canadian Church, and has some members from Pakistan and India. Services are in the Urdu language. In the future, Salim plans to hold some services in English to appeal to young people.

Although Salim has found a new ministry in Canada, he hopes to work in Pakistan again someday. "I miss my congregation there and my fellow Christian pastors," he says.

Secrecy needed

Because of the dangerous position of Christians in Pakistan, Salim is avoiding open contact with friends there.

Of Salim's six children, two attend Calvin Christian School in Dundas, Ont., and two attend Hamilton District Christian High School. The oldest two are beyond school age.

Comparing life in Canada to Pakistan, Salim says, "Culture-wise, it's totally different."

Schuringa sometimes visits the Salim family and is helping them deal with the cultural changes. One difference Schuringa notes is that clergy in Pakistan are considered part of the upper class. He has also helped Arthur Salim find ministry opportunities.

Bethel CRC has an ongoing interest in helping refugees come to Canada, Schuringa explains. The congregation is currently involved with a brokered sponsorship of four refugees. This means the church is a co-signer with another group that is the main sponsor, says Schuringa. If that sponsorship falls through, which is not likely, his church, on its own, will help the refugees come to Canada.

Van Eek, who also attends Bethel CRC, has been meeting with the Salims on a weekly basis to help them settle into life in Canada.

He says the Canadian headquarters of the Christian Reformed Church (in Burlington, Ont.) will help other refugees come to Canada "as opportunity and need arise. We will help refugees whose claim we feel is genuine." In October, Van Eek will become refugee co-ordinator for CRC in Canada.

Dobson should rethink politics

David T. Koyzis

Two months ago the American weekly *U.S. News & World Report* put Dr. James Dobson on its cover. A well-known evangelical psychologist and author, Dobson is founder and president of Focus on the Family. Based in Colorado Springs, Focus has evolved into a $13 million enterprise employing some 1,300 people. It is the principal avenue for Dobson to communicate to a worldwide radio and television audience numbering in the millions.

Since 1977 Dobson has disseminated on-air advice on dating, marriage and parenting, the problems of childhood, adolescence and old age, and a wide range of issues pertaining to family life — often in response to questions posed by his radio audience.

Although I cannot call myself a regular listener to Dobson's program, I have tuned in occasionally over the last dozen years or so. Indeed, most of the advice given by him and his guests seems trustworthy, if unoriginal, and rooted in a fairly solid understanding of God's Word and world. I have no doubt that a great many marriages have been saved and broken families healed through his broadcast and print ministry. In this respect Focus has been used by God to accomplish much good.

Straight lines, sharp contours

In recent years, however, Dobson has turned increasingly to politics, primarily by means of his Family Research Council, established in 1982 and led by former Reagan aide Gary Bauer. Although Dobson himself claims no political ambitions, he has become convinced that the promotion of robust family life requires attention to such issues as abortion, euthanasia, education, permissive sexual mores and drug abuse. It is not surprising, then, that some of his radio programs are devoted to informing listeners of political developments related to these issues.

Here is where his approach is very much weaker, in my judgment.

Indeed, Dobson tends to over-estimate the possibilities of politics in addressing his pet issues. As *U.S News* author Michael J. Gerson points out, Dobson's kind of conservatism does not sufficiently appreciate "the limits and complexities of politics." He is too quick to apply his fervent vision, with its straight lines and sharp contours, to the ambiguities of the political process. That politics might necessitate the careful weighing of conflicting demands rather than the imposition of a single vision seems to have escaped Dobson.

There is a more significant difficulty relating to his professed conservatism. As a typical product of an American evangelical subculture, he seems reflexively to assume the divine chosenness of the American nation. Accordingly, America's founding and its political traditions are self-evidently Christian and any movement or development away from these is a kind of degeneration from God's norm.

His way is God's way?

Similarly, with many other Christian conservatives, Dobson tends to identify God's norm for family life with a particular historically-conditioned form of the family — usually the mid-20th century suburban nuclear family. Thus, along with his good advice that parents should love and discipline their children comes a rather too rigid characterization of the normative roles of men and women, not only in the family, but in the larger society.

Yet three things must be considered. First, God's will for family life is compatible with women exercising responsibility in a variety of contexts. Second, while Western nations have undoubtedly been blessed by the influence of Christianity, no one nation can claim to be specially chosen of God. This status belongs to the Body of Christ. Third, not all social problems are capable of being solved through political means. Dobson's ministry would be immeasurably enhanced if he were to learn these lessons.

David T. Koyzis, who grew up in Wheaton, Ill., and is now a Canadian citizen, teaches political science at Redeemer College, Ancaster, Ont.

Editorial

It ain't easy for Jars 'R Us to break

"*Change* is external; *transition* is internal," said Ben Vandezande of CRC Diaconal Ministries, at the Reformed Institutions in Transformation conference held in Bolton, Ont., a few weekends ago. "Transition is a psychological process people go through when there is change."

Yet many of us will find that the psychological adjustment tends to lag behind change. Some try to hold on to the old realities as long as they can. Others seem to be excited by the promises of change and new realities.

What became evident to me as a participant in that conference is that many of the leaders of the Reformed community (at least those who were there) seem quite adaptable and "progressive." Perhaps that is because they are leaders. They read the times and know that old formulas don't work forever.

Of course, there's no safety in being a "progressive" person any more than that there's safety in being a conservative one. The matter of adapting to change always brings along the questions: What do we keep? What do we throw out? In an abstract way, that is easily solved. As Lee Hollaar, director of the Society of Christian Schools in British Columbia, suggested, "Any traditional form, structure or practice that helps us be alive and faithful should be kept and improved. Any that insulates us from the fresh fire of the Spirit should be modified or retired." That's a helpful perspective on transition, but to make that concrete and specific is where the real challenge comes in.

A time to cry

From a personal point of view, I must admit that transition is not without pain. As I listened to the stories told by Harry Antonides, Calvin Seerveld and Gerald Vandezande, I was overcome with emotion. It took me a while to stop crying afterwards. And I wondered why. I believe it was the fact that all the history they spoke of ran right through my own life.

I am part of that generation that started all these Reformed Christian organizations in the '50s and '60s. And there are some deep wounds connected with that history. Some of those wounds we inflicted on others; some of them were inflicted on us. I realized that my generation has to step aside and that our contribution is becoming less useful to the younger generations.

And only my Lord knows what else brought on those tears. They are the tears of change and transition. Louis Tamminga, retired director of Christian Reformed Pastor-Church Relations, told us the next day that his pillow was wet, too, the night before.

I must admit that I'm concerned about the future of the church and of the Christian organizations. I wonder whether Generation X is not going to throw out too much of what was valuable of the traditions they come from. I don't blame them for any of this. I think that we as adults are more responsible than they are for the situation they are inheriting. The fact that young people read little and show little loyalty to institutions, for example, has everything to do with the kind of world we have created for them.

This is not about blame; this is about the times we live in.

Know your identity

I am also wondering about our tendency to apologize for who we are. The term "Reformed" seemed up for grabs at the conference. We don't agree on what it means to be Reformed, we were told. But why is it that we don't object to anyone calling him- or herself Mennonite? "Mennonite Central Committee" (MCC) sounds fine in our ears, and of late Mennonites are talking about starting a Mennonite University in Winnipeg. I'm sure Mennonites don't all agree, either, on what it means to be Mennonite, but that doesn't keep them from identifying themselves as such.

True ecumenicity does not imply that we all melt into one bland form of Christianity. Rather, it means that we need to know our own identity and that of others, and in that knowledge we embrace each other as brothers and sisters in Christ. As long as we practice humility as we celebrate our strengths and admit our weaknesses, and show appreciation for the strengths of other traditions, we may, I believe, stand tall as we pronounce ourselves Reformed.

A time to tear down?

What I liked about the voices of younger leaders was the emphasis on co-operation and working as teams. Relationships are more important than "getting it right," we were told. Younger leaders place greater emphasis on process, for example. *How* you make changes is as important as *that* you make changes. That's a refreshing change from the hierarchical, end-product thinking of my generation.

In the past we were challenged to dare to think big. We talked about being world shakers, putting Christian magazines on newsstands and waking up slumbering giants. At this conference, we were asked to dare to think small, develop short-term projects and act locally. There is a time and a season for all these things, it seems. A time to tear down and a time to build. Is this a time to tear down?

Honor the power

But the most encouraging aspect of the conference was a spirit of caring and quiet hope. Louis Tamminga called it a spirit of sobriety as opposed to a spirit of triumphalism. His opening speech set the stage for a humble awareness of past mistakes and pretensions.

I am reminded of how Paul spoke of having our "treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us." One could say that *we* are the clay jars, but we could also say that the Reformed worldview we present is a clay jar meant to be broken at some time. But the power that was manifest in the past was from God, and we should not forget that. Never apologize for the power that lay in the ministry of all those agencies represented at the Bolton conference!

There was a lot of talk about letting the Spirit lead us into the future. But Tamminga did not want us to let go of the authority of the Word of God. "We in our 60s would like to bless those in their 20s, 30s and 40s," he said in a closing speech. "We challenge you to serve God, his cause, guided by the Word of God in communal sanctification."

Good advice from a man who spans the beginnings of "Kingdom building" organizations in Canada and their transition into groups of "scavengers" for Christ. **BW**

Christian Courier

Formerly known as Calvinist Contact
Founded in 1945

An independent weekly that seeks to:
◆ report on significant events in the Christian community and the world;
◆ express opinions infused by Scripture and rooted in a Reformed perspective;
◆ provide contact for the Christian community.

CHRISTIAN COURIER STAFF
Editor: Bert Witvoet **cceditor@aol.com**
Publisher: Stan de Jong **ccjournal@aol.com**
Associate Editor: Marian Van Til **cceditor2@aol.com**
Reporter, Layout: Alan Doerksen **ccjournal@aol.com**
Circulation Manager: Grace Bowman **ccsubscrip@aol.com**
Advertising, Layout: Ingrid Torn **ccadverts@aol.com**

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Christian Courier
4-261 Martindale Rd/. St. Catharines, ON, L2W 1A1
Tel: (905) 682-8311;
Fax: (905) 682-8313;
E-mail: cceditor@aol.com

Letters

False memories can certainly be induced

I usually prefer to let letters to the editor stand, but Dr. Van Belle's response to my articles on Satanic Ritual Abuse and False Memory Syndrome contains a number of inaccuracies that cry out for a response.

The most important point to be made is that my articles were concerned with so-called "Satanic Ritual Abuse" and with Repressed Memory Syndrome. Van Belle tries to make it sound like I am skeptical of all reported abuse. This is neither fair nor accurate. I worked as an administrator at a children's mental health centre for almost seven years and I can assure Van Belle and all CC readers that I am completely convinced of the reality of child sexual abuse and I heartily support society's efforts to help the victims of real abuse.

Van Belle doesn't really address the SRA cases in any detail, so I'm not sure if he believes that these cases were genuine or not. Where we clearly disagree is on the question of whether memories of sexual abuse can be "lost" and then, years later, "recovered" accurately. This question is hotly disputed within the mental health community, and I am quite content to agree to disagree with Van Belle on this subject.

The experts say so

However, his assertion that no one has ever demonstrated that false memories of traumatic events can be induced in people must be challenged. In 1993, The American Psychiatric Association stated that "it is impossible to distinguish accurately between true and false memories.... Memories also can be significantly influenced by a trusted person (e.g., therapist, parent involved in a custody dispute) who suggests abuse as an explanation for symptoms/problems, despite initial lack of memory of such abuse."

In 1994, the American Psychological Association Working Group on Investigating Memories of Childhood Abuse concluded, "it is also possible to construct convincing pseudo memories for events that never occurred." In October, 1997, Dr. Peter van Koppen, legal expert and psychologist of the Netherlands Study Center for Criminality and Law Enforcement recommended that professional psychological organizations condemn recovered memory cases as false, after examining more than 500 cases in the Netherlands out of which only one conviction was obtained.

There are many, many more documents, reports, statements and court cases that have come to the conclusion that, yes, false memories can be implanted, and, no, recovered memories are not reliable.

Other victims

I am disappointed that Van Belle chose to suggest that I am unconcerned about real child abuse in order to continue to defend a psychological theory that is utterly besieged with skepticism today. I don't for a minute suspect that he has anything but the best interests of his patients at heart. I have supported and continue to support those who strive to reduce violence and abuse in our society, and promote the equality of women.

However, the victims of false allegations also deserve justice. Dr. Van Belle, I don't see any concern in your letter for the hundreds of men and women whose lives have been destroyed by false allegations. I think you do care, but in the heat of debate, neglected to express this concern. I hope you don't believe they are all, after all, guilty.

Bill Van Dyk
Kitchener, Ont.

Phipps belittles Judaism

In response to your June 19 editorial, "Will the United Church bear a faithful witness?":

Devout Jews can hardly take comfort in the Rev. Bill Phipps' belief that United Church members should no longer preach the gospel of Jesus Christ to them. In effect, he is belittling Judaism by treating it as a cultural artifact rather than as a genuine religion making universal truth claims.

It is ironic that someone who does this has the temerity to label as "anti-Semitic" those taking Judaism seriously enough to challenge these claims.

As James Skillen [executive director of the Center for Public Justice, Washington, D.C.] has recently written: "Apostles of contemporary relativism preach that Christianity and all other faiths are by their very nature parochial: in other words, Christian faith may have validity for those who hold it, but its truth claims have no greater standing than any other truth claims. Yet what is this gospel of relativism but a claim that relativism is ultimately true? To accept this gospel, one must reject all other ultimate truth claims. To claim that all is relative thus turns out to be self-contradictory."

One can only hope that United Church members will be able to see through this false gospel and proclaim instead that Jesus is the Way, the Truth and the Life.

David T. Koyzis
Hamilton, Ontario

Justice for Redeemer

Today (June 17) I had the pleasure of attending a hearing at the Ontario Legislature on Bill Pr. 17, a private member's bill amending degree-granting powers for Redeemer College (Ancaster, Ont.). The Honorable Tony Skarica, sponsor of the bill, introduced the Redeemer delegation at the hearing, including president Justin Cooper. In a wonderful slip of the tongue, Mr. Skarica referred to Redeemer's president as "Dr. *Justice* Cooper."

For many years Ontario degree-granting policy has done *in*justice to Redeemer College and other independent institutions. "Justice delayed is justice denied," says the adage. But on this particular day, justice would not be denied. The bill received unanimous support at the hearing.

Today *Justin* got *justice*. Praise God!

Harry Fernhout
Brampton, Ont.

Bring Jesus to persons of every race and religion

Thank you, Bert Witvoet and Michael Veenema, for your fine articles about the United Church's (lack of) witness to Jews. We must not despise or mistreat Jewish people, but we must continue bringing them the gospel. Deliberately depriving them of Israel's Messiah damages Jews and dishonors Jesus. Simon Peter told his fellow Jews, "Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). I believed this as a student doing street evangelism with Jews for Jesus, and I still believe it today. Christians must keep bringing Jesus to Jews and to persons of every race and religion.

David Feddes
The Back to God Hour
Palos Heights, Illinois

Religion bashing shows insecurity

It was with great dismay that I read the June 19, 1998, issue whose entire theme seemed to be one of religion-bashing, that is, putting down other religions including the United Church. The latter seems to have already grasped a wisdom that continues to elude us: there is a richness in other religions that could enhance our own experience of the Divine if we would only allow ourselves to dialogue with them.

Any religious tradition that seeks to identify itself through negative denigration of other traditions is clearly treading on very thin emotional ice. Little wonder that searching souls look elsewhere for spiritual nourishment when all we have to offer is our own insecure and barren need to prove others wrong.

We should, I believe, leave the judgment about which religion is the one true one to God, and instead focus on proclaiming the beauty of our own tradition.

Michael Geisterfer
Aylmer, Quebec

Christian Courier

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Canada mail: Publications Mail Registration No. 0451. Postage paid at St. Catharines, Ont. Postmaster: send address changes to Christian Courier, 4-261 Martindale Rd., St. Catharines, Ont. L2W 1A1.
U.S. mail: Christian Courier (USPS 518-090). Second-class postage paid at Lewiston, NY. Postmaster: send address changes to Christian Courier, Box 110, Lewiston, NY 14092.

Subscriptions: (effective Feb. 1, 1995)	**Canada** (GST incl.)	**U.S.A.** (GST free)
one year (44 issues)	$43.50	$35.00 U.S.
two years (88 issues)	$82.00	$66.00 U.S.
three years (132 issues)	$123.00	$99.00 U.S.
overseas one year	$135 airmail	$85.00 surface mail

Advertising deadlines: display advertising: Wednesday, 8:30 a.m.; classified advertising: Thursday, 8:30 a.m. All deadlines are for the following week's issue. See classified pages for more details. Advertising rate sheets available.
(ISSN 1192-3415) Published weekly on Fridays except for Feb. 27, April 10, June 12, July 10, Aug. 14, Oct. 2, Nov. 27, and Dec. 25.
Address all correspondence to: 4-261 Martindale Rd., St. Catharines, Ont. L2W 1A1, Tel.: 905-682-8311 or fax: 905-682-8313, e-mail: subscriptions: ccsubscrip@aol.com, advertising: ccadverts@aol.com
PRINTED IN CANADA
This tabloid contains recycled paper.

FBI scientists analyze Jefferson's 'separation of church and state' letter

WASHINGTON, D.C. (EP) — The FBI's crime lab has turned up new evidence in a 200-year-old mystery. Analysis of a letter from Thomas Jefferson has uncovered some corrections and changes, illustrating that Jefferson's pledge to separate church and state was made for reasons of political expediency, according to the organizer of an exhibit on religion in America at the Library of Congress.

Contrary to popular belief, the famous phrase "separation of church and state" is not in the U.S. Constitution. It comes from a letter Jefferson wrote to some Baptists in Danbury, Connecticut. According to James H. Hutson, who heads the library's manuscripts collections, Jefferson's letter was an attempt to explain his unwillingness to issue Thanksgiving proclamations.

According to FBI laboratory analysis, Jefferson originally wrote that in his refusal to issue such a proclamation he was "confining myself to the duties of my station, which are merely temporal." That was crossed out. Hutson says Jefferson's political advisors convinced him that the sentence would alienate New England churchgoers.

In calling for a wall of separation between church and state, Jefferson originally proposed an "eternal" wall, but deleted that word as well.

Jefferson wrote the famous letter in 1802, after winning a presidential election in which opponents attacked him as an atheist. His views on religion were out of step with his time. Of the 13 original colonies, nine had official churches.

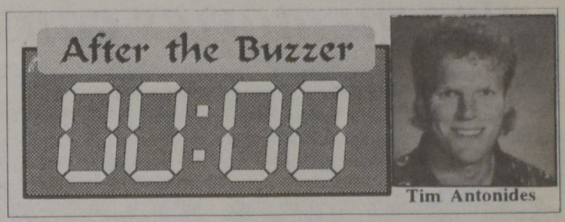
'Partisan counter-punch'

Explaining the significance of the find, Hutson wrote, "It will be of considerable interest in assessing the credibility of the Danbury Baptist letter as a tool of constitutional interpretation to know, as we now do, that it was written as a partisan counter-punch, aimed by Jefferson below the belt of enemies who were tormenting him more than a decade after the First Amendment was composed."

The exhibit suggests that the letter was motivated by Jefferson's political need to mollify critics and build political support, and was not intended as a straightforward interpretation of a constitutional principle. The exhibit notes that Jefferson began to attend worship services held at the House of Representatives two days after writing the letter, and that he permitted worship services to be held in federal buildings.

Jefferson's letter and the FBI's restoration work are among the items in an exhibit at the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C., called, "Religion and the Founding of the American Republic."

World Cup fever



Tim Antonides

As I'm writing this column, French riot police are fighting Tunisian and English soccer hooligans in the streets of Marseille. Not coincidentally, England and Tunisia are playing each other in the first round of the World Cup. It's not pretty but it's an ugly side of what is probably the greatest sports event going. Whether or not you find soccer boring, you have to admit that the World Cup is pretty compelling.

I admit to being cynical of many things in the world of sports. There is so much that stinks. As Christians, we see things in this event that bother us too.

Perhaps the most striking aspect is the way in which people wrap up and personify their identity in the performance of their national team. Such a distortion can lead to violence (as we have seen in Marseille) and a warped sense of what competition is. On the humorous side, it's disgusting but hilarious to watch a player stealthily trip an opposing forward and then vehemently plead innocence, while the tripped player writhes in mock agony on the turf.

This tournament of the world's best teams is laden with every kind of sports drama you could ask for. Consider the Netherlands versus Belgium match-up. That alone is enough to glue me to the set (bag of dropjes in hand). Then there's one between the U.S. and Iran (I wonder if Jimmy Carter will show). Can you imagine what it would be like if Croatia and Yugoslavia faced each other in the final game? Talk about a pressure cooker.

World's most popular game

This is an amazing event: a tournament to decide the champion in the world's most popular game. The level of emotion among the players and fans is extreme. Driving by the Italian Cultural Club in Vancouver during the Chile/Italy games was like Mardi Gras and New Year's Eve rolled into one.

Canada didn't make it into the Cup, but I still can't help but get excited about things. When Scotland was tied with mighty Brazil in the first game, I wanted to call every lad and lassie I knew who had anything whatsoever to do with that wonderful land.

It's not perfect, but the World Cup has enough honorable qualities to make it as redemptive a sporting event as you will ever find anywhere in the professional sports ring. For one, its aesthetic dimension is hard to miss. It can be a slow game, sure; but the grace and beauty of it all is abundant.

Watch someone like Ronaldo from Brazil dribble the ball up the field. Look at how accurately a midfielder can place a long pass right in front of one of his forwards. Notice some of the 30- to 40-yard shots on goal that are made to dip, bend or curve. Focus on the goalie during a corner kick to get a sense of the strategic defensive placement that is used. This is beautiful stuff!

The other thing I find redemptive about the World Cup is that in many ways it's an equal opportunity employer. A young boy growing up in Paraguay has just as much opportunity to excel in the sport as the kid practicing in the park on your street. There isn't the huge economic barrier that exists in most other professional sports.

Okay, it still is a bunch of grown men chasing a white ball around a grass field. It also happens to have as much integrity as we'll ever see in any sports event of any kind.

Tim Antonides teaches Grade 5 at Surrey Christian School, Surrey, B.C.

Church soil 'too well trod,' says sociologist

GEORGETOWN, Ky. (EP) — Most churches are not prepared to respond to the constantly changing needs of their communities, sociologist Nancy Ammerman recently told a group of Baptist pastors in Kentucky.

Ammerman, author of *Congregation and Community*, has studied how congregations have reacted to changes in their communities during the last decade. "Because people move, congregations are constantly being reconstructed," she said.

Increased mobility in our society has changed the nature of communities, and that in turn has changed the relationships between churches and communities, she added. "How we think about our relationship to a given ... neighborhood will constantly have to be reconstructed."

Ammerman and her fellow researchers predict that 60 to 75 per cent of the congregations they studied won't exist 20 years from now. "Their soil was simply a little too-well trod," she said, a reference to Jesus' parable of the sower in which seed falling on hard ground was eaten by birds instead of producing fruit.

Viagra a lifesaver for church

LONDON, England (EP) — The success of the anti-impotence drug Viagra has meant increased funding for the Church of England. The value of the church's investment in Pfizer, the pharmaceutical firm which produces the drug, has doubled in the past five months, according to a report from ChurchNet UK News Service.

Church officials said profiting from the drug does not present a moral dilemma. They explained, "There is nothing at all wrong with us investing in such a company, which makes hundreds of drugs, many of which are lifesavers."

England creating 'spiritual pygmies says evangelical group

LONDON, England (EP) — A proposal to abandon compulsory worship in England's public schools could turn young people into "spiritual pygmies" with no sense of the transcendent, according to the Evangelical Alliance UK.

Criticizing moves by the National Association of Head Teachers to seek an end to daily worship, Martyn Eden, public affairs director of the Alliance, said, "Depriving young people of the experience of worship would impoverish their lives and lock them into a closed, materialistic world. Spiritual development is an explicit goal of our education system. To lose worship would risk creating spiritual pygmies with no experience of the transcendent or spiritual."

He added, "Polls show that parents want their children to experience worship in school and there are many outside bodies willing to help schools meet their obligations. This being the case, there is no case for scrapping collective worship."

Film Review

Six days, Seven Nights is an interminable week

Marian Van Til

*Rated **PG**. Stars David Schwimmer, Temuera Morrison. Written by Michael Browning. Produced and directed by Ivan Reitman.*

Few would deny that Harrison Ford has, in the two decades since his appearance in the *Star Wars* films, rightly earned a reputation as a good actor who is reasonably choosy about his films. That, in fact, is the main reason I took a chance on this one.

Ford must have been asleep when he read this script. Or, despite his long-time fame and presumed wealth, maybe he needed the money. Or maybe Canadian producer/director Ivan Reitman's considerable comedic reputation conned him.

Once into it, Ford was surely smart enough to know how bad this film is. If he survived by mugging for the camera (calling far too often on that knowing, lopsided smirk of his), the audience might have preferred a street mugging to what they get here.

Purporting to be a romantic comedy, the film has precious few humorous moments, is not "romantic" in *any* sense (though the scenery is breathtaking), and asks viewers to suspend disbelief far too often when incredulity, or simply boredom, would be the natural response.

'I am woman'

A woman named Robin (Anne Heche) is an ad executive in New York City. That's the film's first problem: she's the latest in an amazingly long line of female character cliches packed into film history. According to current Hollywood thinking, there aren't any smart, professional women in all of New York who *aren't* ad execs. (See also *The Horse Whisperer,* et al.) Such women are flinty, none-too-likable urbanites who work virtually non-stop. And they have a peculiar susceptibility to chucking their careers and urban life to ride or sail off into decidedly non-urban sunsets with rugged, rural, unconventional men.

Robin's boyfriend of three years, on the other hand (David Schwimmer, whose acting here consists of looking earnestly doe-eyed) is the hopeless romantic, desperately in love, endlessly lavishing Robin with attention and gifts (is there a man alive who could keep *that* up for three years running?). Note, too, the clever reversal of gender stereotypes!

Boring Caribbean?

Well, Loverboy takes Overworked Woman on a Carribean vacation. The island they'll visit is remote (of course), requiring a small chartered plane to get there — courtesy of a grungy looking but good-hearted guy named Quinn (aka Harrison Ford), who is old enough to be Robin's father. Quinn does not impress Robin, and Loverboy isn't keen on him either (we couldn't have guessed that, of course).

After one blissful day on their island of choice, Overworked Woman's job intrudes (we couldn't have guessed that either), and she must fly to Tahiti for a couple days to arrange a photo shoot for several famous personalities who don't want their precious time wasted.

The pilot, of course, is Quinn. Then, well, you've heard how very unpredictable the weather in the Caribbean can be. The next thing you know a howling thunderstorm grounds Quinn and Robin on an even more remote island where they spend the rest of the week acting like Robinson Crusoe and his girl Friday. Except that they're supposed to convince us that they sincerely dislike each other most of that time, because that's a prerequisite to falling in love.

Relief at last

In the week they're stranded they survive an earthquake; are able to gather everything they need to eat; evade "pirates" who shoot modern cannons at them from practically point-blank range; find the fuselage and pontoons of a WWII Japanese seaplane for parts; magically produce a hacksaw, plentiful stands of mature bamboo and yards and yards of brandnew rope needed to rig the pontoons onto their own plane so they can finally take off (while the pirates are gunning them again).

Meanwhile, on the emotional front, there's just one minor problem. Loverboy and Overworked Woman had become engaged the night before she left for Tahiti. Now some viewers with moral scruples might object to the two-timing they know is coming. So in order that such viewers won't get too turned off, they're shown Loverboy sincerely regretting his decidedly adolescent, literally salivating, ogle-eyed attraction (and subsequent succumbing to said attraction) to Quinn's belly-dancing girlfriend; and Quinn and the O.W. don't actually make love (yet).

But all's well that ends well: that week has convinced Loverboy and Robin that they shouldn't get married after all: they weren't really meant for each other. That's perhaps the only bit of relief this movie has to offer.

Dobson back after mild stroke

COLORADO SPRINGS, Colo. (EP) — Dr. James C. Dobson, president and founder of Focus on the Family, has returned to work after suffering a mild stroke.

Dobson was hospitalized June 16 in Colorado Springs after becoming ill. There was no indication of paralysis or loss of consciousness. The stroke was caused by a blood clot and was aggressively treated using a new medicine known as TPA (tissue plasminogen activator). The drug, which has only been used for stroke victims since 1996, is a dangerous medication that can cause hemorrhaging or even death, but can also greatly improve chances for recovery if administered within three hours of a stroke.

Physicians determined that a tiny blood clot the size of a pinhead had lodged itself in Dobson's left temporal lobe — the part of the brain responsible for speech, writing and understanding. He had been unable to speak for the first 12 hours after the stroke, but has since recovered his speech.

Dobson's physician said a heart attack has been ruled out. Dobson suffered a mild heart attack in 1990, and since that time has followed a rigorous diet and exercise program to improve his health.

Belfast plaque commemorates C.S. Lewis

Marian Van Til, with files from James O'Fee

BELFAST, N. Ireland — On June 16 in fine, sunny weather, the Lord Mayor of Belfast, David Alderdice, unveiled a plaque at Dundela Villas (now Dundela Flats), the site of the birthplace of C.S. Lewis. The plaque commemorates this year's 100th anniversary of the birth (on Nov. 29) of that great "author and Christian apologist," as the plaque calls him.

The plaque was sponsored by the C.S. Lewis Centenary group of Belfast, which also produced a brochure outlining the newly designated C.S. Lewis trails (Lewis was an avid hiker).

Lord Mayor Alderdice, a graduate of Magdalen College, Oxford, where Lewis spent most of his career as a don, said, "I have a personal fondness for C.S. Lewis, having as a youngster read avidly his famous *Chronicles of Narnia.* I now have the opportunity of introducing my own little boy, Matthew, to the world of Narnia. And for two years I lived with the sound of the bell tolling at Magdalen College....

"[Lewis] became one of the greatest Christian writers of our century, and to represent the Victoria ward where he was born and grew up is a privilege. He never lost his love for his native land, returning frequently, and I intend to play my part in making sure that Belfast people realize they have this proud heritage."

Redeemer gets degree go-ahead

CC staff

ANCASTER, Ont. — The Ontario Legislature approved the Redeemer Charter Amendment Bill Pr17 on June 25, a move that allows the college to issue Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Science degrees to its graduates.

In announcing the passage of the bill, Redeemer president Justin Cooper noted that it represented a milestone for the college and its supporters. "This is the culmination of over 20 years of work and prayer," stated Cooper. "God has answered those prayers in a mighty way and we're both grateful and humbled to see it come together in this manner."

The original college charter, issued in 1980, authorized Redeemer to issue "unique" Bachelor of Christian Studies (BCS) degrees. "While graduates with this degree have been accepted at 65 graduate schools in North America and beyond, students will be better served by the regular BA and B.Sc. degree designations Redeemer can now offer," says Mark Van Beveren, director of community and media relations.

In his letter to Dr. Cooper, Education Minister David Johnson congratulated the college on the outstanding assessment given by the review panel, and observed that the province of Ontario was fortunate to have Redeemer College as part of its university system.

Church

Reformed Church in America synod rejects request to end discipline of homosexuals

Adopts 3-year moratorium on homosexual debate

Darrell Todd Maurina

HOLLAND, Mich. (URNS) — By a 160 to 109 margin, the Reformed Church in America's general synod voted down on June 8 a proposal to "request the judicatories of the RCA to refrain from discipline based solely on a person's sexual orientation or theological judgments concerning sexual orientation."

The motion by Rev. Allan Janssen, stated clerk of the Classis of Albany, came as an amendment to an earlier recommendation by denominational general secretary Rev. Wes Granberg-Michaelson in his June 5 speech asking the assembly to establish a three-year moratorium on discussion of homosexuality.

The official RCA denominational position is "that the practicing homosexual lifestyle is contrary to Scripture, while at the same time encouraging love and sensitivity toward such persons as fellow human beings."

Granberg-Michaelson's proposal contrasted with an effort by Rev. Doug Van Bronkhorst, senior pastor of First Reformed Church in the Grand Rapids suburb of Grandville, to rebuke one of the two RCA seminaries, New Brunswick Theological Seminary in New Jersey, for hiring an openly practicing lesbian, Dr. Judith Wray, as a New Testament professor. After an eruption of protests by local RCA churches, the seminary board voted to rescind the one-year interim appointment.

What of the future?

Granberg-Michaelson called the seminary decision to appoint Wray a "mistake," warning that "it threatened to create a breach of trust between the denomination and New Brunswick Theological Seminary." Granberg-Michaelson noted that "this [synodical] action prevents a potentially divisive conflict from erupting right now in the denomination," but said "it still leaves us as a church with a crucial and important question: how will we, the Reformed Church in America, choose to address this issue, not only in this situation, but in the future?"

In a later speech to the synod, the president of New Brunswick Theological Seminary apologized to delegates but made clear that he hadn't changed his views on homosexuality. He said he hoped the RCA would have created a safe forum in which homosexual members of the denomination could participate in the ongoing denominational dialogue without fear of discipline.

Ed Vandenberg steps down as Lighthouse director

RON RUPKE PHOTOS

Retiring Lighthouse director Ed Vandenberg (centre) says goodbye to co-worker Samiu Saud-Medina.

Ron Rupke, Lighthouse Board member

TORONTO — The Lighthouse, a diaconal ministry of the Christian Reformed Church in downtown Toronto, said goodbye to its first full-time executive director at the end of May. Ed Vandenberg is leaving the organization he has served since January 1990 to pursue further studies and an ongoing interest in prison ministry.

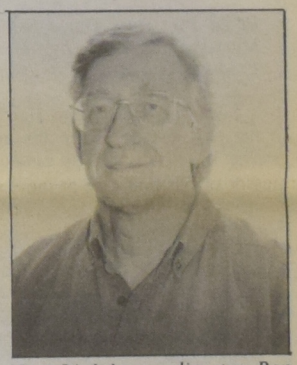
During Ed Vandenberg's years at the Lighthouse, this ministry focused on the needs of refugees and newcomers to Canada. The Lighthouse helped many church congregations sponsor families stranded in refugee camps in Asia or displaced by war in eastern Europe. Lighthouse staff and volunteers assist newcomers to Canada in many ways including material assistance, language classes, assistance in filling out government forms, and in finding work, community and friends. Adult Bible studies and daily devotion bible school programs during the summer months have introduced many Lighthouse clients to Jesus Christ.

In his goodbye address at a May 22 farewell dinner attended by co-workers and volunteers, Ed Vandenberg reflected on his Lighthouse years as a lesson in citizenship. He said, "If I have learned anything while at the Lighthouse it is this, to be thankful for my Canadian citizenship and to see it as a picture of a much greater reality: that I am a citizen of God's heavenly kingdom. There are no administrative fees or documentation to become such a citizen. Here you need no medicals. There is no head tax to pay. The privilege of heavenly citizenship is by God's grace open to all, no matter what your earthly status is. It is open to anyone who humbly turns away from a life of sin and who seeks to live for God. Yet this citizenship has implications for everything I do in my earthly sojourn."

On a humorous note, Ed Vandenberg noted that he had met his wife Elena, a new immigrant from the Philippines, while serving at the Lighthouse, and "Elena is one gift that I will be taking with me when I leave here. Sorry, people!"

The Lighthouse Board of Directors appointed Ben Vanderlugt of London, Ont., to fill the position vacated by Ed Vandenberg, in June 1998.

Vanderlugt hails from London, Ont., where he was previously vice-president of Duthler Textiles Limited, a chain of retail fabric stores which closed in 1997. In the past year, he has been involved in special projects for Habitat for Humanity London, Inc., and the London Good News Christian Reformed Church.



New Lighthouse director Ben Vanderlugt

Tyndale College chooses a Tyndale as chancellor

Alan Doerksen (with files from ChristianWeek)

TORONTO — Tyndale College and Seminary has chosen a new chancellor to match its new name: Tony Tyndale.

"God's gift of a new name for our school is now further enhanced by the appointment of Tony Tyndale as chancellor-elect," said Brian Stiller, president of Tyndale.

The name Tyndale was chosen recently for the school (formerly known as Ontario Bible College/Ontario Theological Seminary) in honor of William Tyndale, the 16th century pioneer of the English Bible who was martyred for his work. Vere Stafford Carrington (Tony) Tyndale is a 13th generation descendent of William's elder brother, Edward.

Tony Tyndale was born in London, England, and studied at Oxford, Cambridge and the University of Toronto. After 12 years in the British army, he worked 24 years with Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship of Canada, serving as a teacher, mentor and coach to students and staff. He also spent 12 years as executive director of South American Mission Society, Canada. Tyndale has also taught at Toronto's Wycliffe College and continues to take part in teaching and training programs in many parts of Africa.

On June 1, Tyndale replaced former college president William McRae as chancellor. McRae will continue to serve as president emeritus and minister at large of the college.

Two new sem profs replace well-known retirees

Dr. Ronald Nydam

Dr. Dean Deppe

Marian Van Til

GRAND RAPIDS, Mich. — The Christian Reformed Church synod two weeks ago ratified the appointments of two new professors who will replace well-known, long-time professors who are retiring.

Dr. Dean Deppe of Prinsburg, Minnesota, will be assistant professor of New Testament, replacing Dr. David Holwerda, who has taught New Testament at Calvin Theological Seminary since 1984.

Dr. Ronald Nydam of Denver, Colorado, was appointed assistant professor of pastoral care, replacing Dr. Melvin Hugen, professor of pastoral care at the seminary since 1970.

After public interviews with Deppe and Nydam, the two were unanimously approved and welcomed to the seminary faculty by synod delegates.

Dean Deppe, who obtained his doctorate in theology at the Free University in Amsterdam, is currently the pastor of Unity CRC in Prinsburg. He previously taught several New Testament courses at the seminary on an interim basis. His master's thesis was on "The Salt Sayings of Jesus" and his doctoral dissertation examined "The Sayings of Jesus in the Epistle of James."

Ronald Nydam, originally from Whitinsville, Mass., has lived and worked as a pastoral counsellor in Chicago as well as Denver, where he is currently agency director of pastoral counseling for Denver, Inc.

Nydam obtained his PhD from the University of Denver and Iliff School of Theology in religion and psychological studies and pastoral psychotherapy.

'Abortion atrocity' addressed

Rachel Boehm Van Harmelen and Marian Van Til

GRAND RAPIDS, Mich. — The CRC synod, on June 19, called abortion a "North American atrocity" and urged CRC congregations to "boldly proclaim" their opposition to abortion, in order to "avoid the guilt of remaining silent."

Classis Zeeland (Michigan) which brought the matter before synod had wanted a proclamation which expressed " bold opposition to the [North] American holocaust of abortion." But the majority of delegates were reluctant to use the word holocaust because of its indelible link to the Holocaust of World War II.

Synod did call attention to the fact that "it has been 25 years since the 1973 U.S. Supreme Court's Roe vs. Wade decision. In 25 years, abortion in the U.S. and Canada has destroyed over 37 million innocent lives created by God. On this anniversary, it is appropriate and necessary for synod to address the enormity of this wanton and intentional destruction of human life."

Saying that "our responsilities go beyond saving the lives of the unborn," synod urged CRC congregations and members to minister sensitively to women who choose to carry their children to term, to unwed mothers and their children, and to women dealing with the aftermath of abortion.

The synod also publicly rejected violent retaliation against those who perform abortions, saying, "[We] affirm that though abortion is an exceedingly violent act, we reject all violence against those who perpetrate this act."

Wrestling reality

Chapter & Verse

Wayne Brouwer
Andrew Kuyvenhoven
● Laura Smit
Al Wolters

"Your decrees are righteous forever; give me understanding that I may live." Psalm 119:144

In the classic movie *Harvey*, Jimmy Stewart plays the character Elwood P. Dowd, an affable middle-aged man who spends his days drinking in the company of his best friend, a large white rabbit named Harvey whom no one else can see. The psychologist who is attempting to treat Mr. Dowd for this condition says to him, "We all must face reality, Dowd — sooner or later." To which Elwood Dowd replies: "Well, I've wrestled with reality for 35 years, Doctor, and I'm happy to state I finally won out over it."

In the context of the movie, Elwood is a hero whose imagination enables him to live a happy, gentle life. Elwood's mother always told him, "In this world, Elwood, you must be oh so smart or oh so pleasant."

Considering those alternatives, he concludes: "For years I was smart. I recommend pleasant." Being pleasant is what Elwood does best. He is *so* pleasant that his sister ultimately decides against having him take psychological treatment, fearing that if he becomes well he will also become unpleasant and unhappy.

In the days when he was working at being smart, Elwood was not resisting reality, but trying to master and understand it. Real intelligence requires an encounter with reality, a mind which has been informed by the world without. Having changed his goal to being pleasant, he finds that reality interferes.

Black-and-white movies are safe?

I was watching *Harvey* as the result of a conversation with some friends who were bemoaning the sorry state of movies today. We agreed that much of what is released into our theaters is violent, profane, cynical and immoral. Our conversation centred on ways in which we have learned to filter what we watch in order to protect ourselves from the worst of what's out there. One of my friends gave me his secret: only watch black-and-white movies. He explained that black-and-white movies are old enough to be safe.

So when I was standing in the video store the evening following that conversation, I decided to rent an old movie, a classic movie, a black-and-white movie, a safe and moral movie. I rented *Harvey*.

It is certainly a charming movie, and the character of Elwood P. Dowd is a charming character. In the entire movie, there is no violence, no profanity, and only the mildest suggestion of sexual activity. But is it really a moral movie?

For most of Christian history, the church has identified four cardinal virtues which are basic to Christian morality, and of those four there is one which is pre-eminent, one virtue on which all other Christian life is founded. That virtue is *prudence*.

By prudence, Christian theology means a clear-eyed, accurate view of reality as God designed it, an understanding which is then fully integrated into the decisions and actions of daily life. It is almost exactly the same virtue as the virtue of wisdom which is extolled in the Old Testament.

Wisdom requires knowing and loving the ordering law of God and allowing that law to structure one's own life. The wise person is able to penetrate the lies and illusions of false gods and false worldviews in order to see reality clearly as God designed it.

Glorifying imprudence

The movie *Harvey* glorifies imprudent and unwise living, living which takes refuge from reality in pleasant illusions and irresponsible behavior. The very fact that the movie is charming and appears so innocuous makes it more disturbing.

Many people look at Christianity as an illusion similar to Elwood's belief in his rabbit friend, Harvey, a lie which helps to make people pleasant; a charming illusion which serves as a refuge from reality. But Christian faith is meant to be quite the reverse, to be the penetrating light of truth in a world of illusions and confusion.

The Bible doesn't require us to be pleasant, but it often challenges us to be wise. We find life when our desire for pleasant illusions is surrendered, when we submit to the nature of God's righteous decrees. When we wrestle with reality, we must hope that it will conquer us.

Laura Smit graduated from Boston University in May with a PhD in philosophical aesthetics and will begin a post-doctoral fellowship at BU in September. After the fellowship she will take up an appointment in the fall of 1999 at Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Mich., in the religion and theology department in the History of Christian Thought.

CRC synod 'regrets' IRM crisis

Rachel Boehm Van Harmelen and Marian Van Til

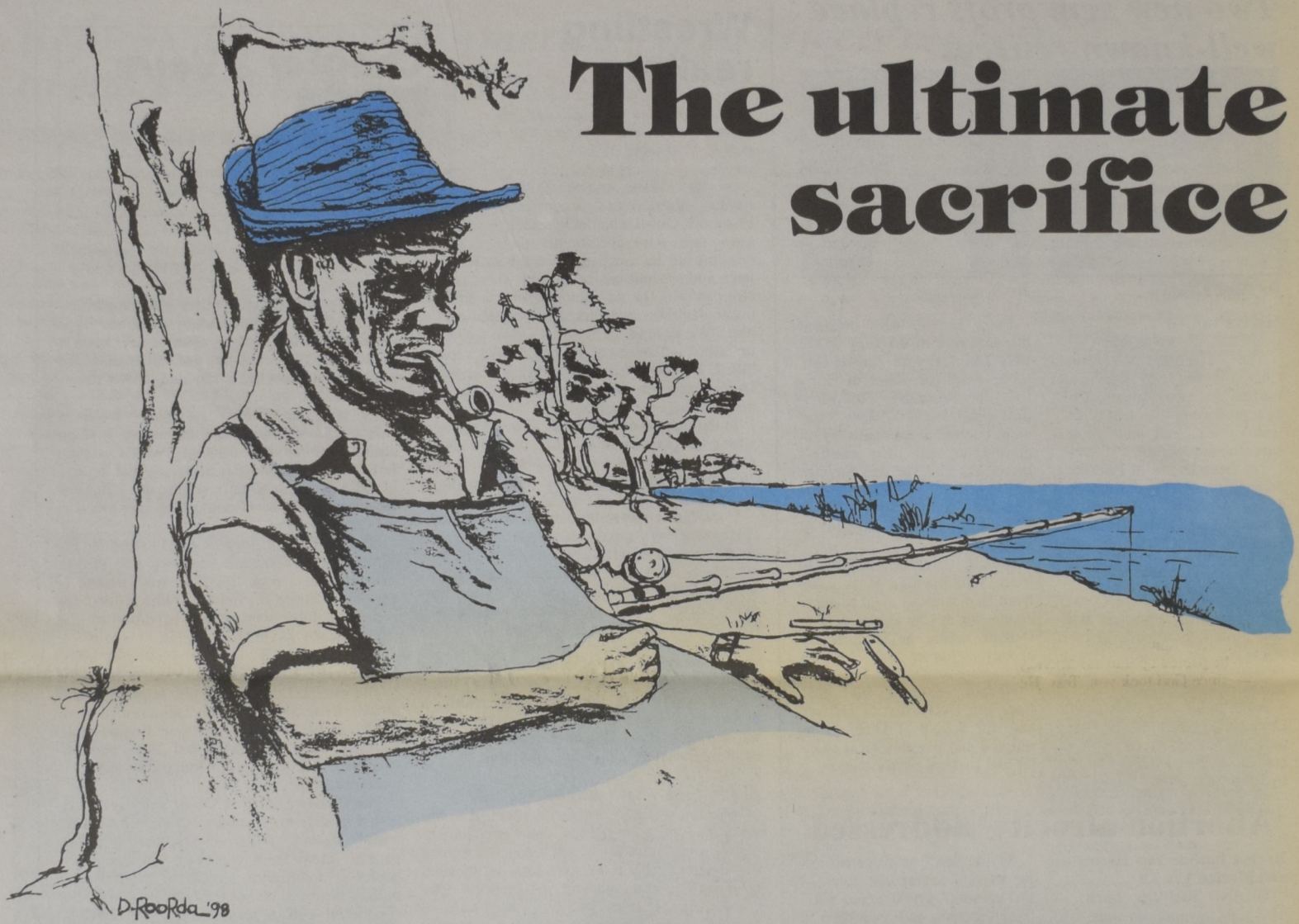
GRAND RAPIDS, Mich. – The CRC synod issued a statement expressing "deep regret for the pain that many are experiencing" as a result of the failure of the IRM Corporation, a California real estate venture.

Church leaders invested $11.5 million worth of church agency funds in the company, which last fall defaulted on payments to investors. Pressure has built since then among a segment of the denomination for the resignation of the church leaders who okayed the risky investment, which defied the church's investment policies. Those policies have now been further tightened.

Synod issued a veiled reprimand to the leaders involved. Its statement conveyed "sincere regret that denominational agencies invested funds in speculative ventures in contradiction to synodically approved investment policies."

Synod also said that financial statements and information about denominational and agency investments should be more accessible to CRC members. It mandated the CRC board of trustees to provide each year's synod with a summary of all investments owned by agencies and institutions of the Christian Reformed Church.

The ultimate sacrifice



Tom Haesche

"Two months to live," were Doc Pinne's words. And a 75-mile trip to a medical centre had confirmed the doc's prognosis. Well, he mused dryly. He could have told them the same thing, without all of their fuss and hullabaloo. An 80-year-old man can be pretty certain his time has come. Especially when something is gnawing away at his innards. He and Doc Pinne were the only ones aware of his impending demise.

He hadn't told Peg, his daughter; she had her hands full with a growing family. Tim, his grandson, was too young to understand. And Paul, his son-in-law, was away buying farm machinery.

Ed had made out his will, leaving them 97 healthy Holsteins; 200 acres of prime grazing land; the house and several outbuildings. He had worked the farm for over 50 years. A prosperous farm, built with sacrifice and hard work.

****

Ed Cartwright was sitting in the dappled shade of an old dogwood tree, his split-bamboo fishing rod on the grass beside him; the line strung out to a wine-bottle cork bobbing gently on the calm waters. He was whittling on a piece of willow, fashioning a whistle for Timothy. His only catch was a nine-inch yellow perch flapping crazily in the shallow water, a prisoner on Ed's stringer.

He bit down hard on the stem of his pipe as a jagged pain tore at him. But he drove the pain from his consciousness, like a debt he would pay later, and resumed whittling. Ed was a work-hardened man, lean, with a ruddy complexion. Time-etched lines, coupled with the strain of intermittent pain, gave his face a thin, drawn look.

> Closing his eyes to savor the warmth, he dug his fingers into the moist soil, knowing that it would soon reclaim him.

Pushing his yellow, straw hat to the back of his head he glanced at his watch, a gift from his deceased wife. Ten o'clock and no Billy, he mused, laying the knife and whistle aside. Removing the pipe from his mouth, he tapped the ashes out on the heel of his shoe. "Well, if I know Billy, he's gonna be late for his own funeral," he said softly. Yeah, it figures, he mused. Cause the ol' fool is late for everything else. But he'd better get his butt movin' before the sun gets up there.

Ed gazed skyward. Billy knows the bass desert the weed beds for deeper water when it gets hot. Yawning, he resumed his whittling, now and then flexing tired fingers. Billy Baumsted had been his neighbor and fishing buddy for over 40 years. Ed paused to dwell on this, realizing that Billy, a few years younger than Ed, soon would be hearing the flutter of angel's wings himself.

"Ya won't have to look hard for me, Bill," he said, as though Billy sat beside him. "Just ask one o' those angels where the nearest fishin' hole is. I'll be waitin'. And I promise not to confound ya with any more o' them fishin' yarns."

Ed Cartwright was famous locally for his colorful fish tales. And he would derive genuine pleasure from Billy's pained expressions when Billy didn't know if Ed was leveling with him or fabricating.

"Is that a fact now?" Billy would say, narrowing his gaze at Ed. "Well, the only thing that would not make ya a bare-faced liar would be for ya to grow a mustache." Then, hitching up his corduroys, Billy would let go a stream of tobacco juice. Ed knew his friend didn't believe him half the time. But after the last yarn about the big one that got away, Bill had been spending more time fishing.

Ed strained his eyes at a speck moving along the time-worn trail to the lake. But it was a cow seeking shade to work its cud. Uncomfortable, Ed shifted his weight up against the rough-

barked tree. It'll prob'ly take him longer to get here, Ed mused, what with his hip mending from a fall off his tractor. "Ya should've known better than to climb up on that contraption at your age," Ed chided, as though Billy were there beside him. He grimaced as another pain doubled him over. "They'll get worse near the end," Doc Pinne had warned him.

"What a rotten way to die," he mused, leaning against the tree. Shrugging away the morbid thought, he concentrated on the whistle, deciding it needed more work. Waving away a stubborn bumblebee, he reached for a piece of sandpaper, his musing turning to Peg and his grandson.

I wonder if they'll miss me, sour ol' crank that I am. He dwelt on it for a few moments. Why, sure they will, he decided, resuming his whittling. Peg and me have been pretty close since — he peered up into the heavens — since God took you, Tess. He sanded a burr to smoothness. "And that Timmy," he said aloud. "Why, that kid follows me like he was my shadow. He'd be here now, except for school." Flexing his fingers, Ed peered out over the lake.

A robin flashed and wheeled in the sun, its breast bursting with song. The sun was high in the sky, and the sounds of summer reached his ears; a woodpecker hammering a tree somewhere behind him; cicadas singing in the tall grass off to his left. Raising his eyes, he peered at three swallows as they climbed high above his barn. He glanced at his watch again, then toward Billy's place. A figure was moving along the path, and he knew it was his friend.

"What did ya do, get up before dawn so's ya could get here first?" Ed mimicked, knowing that it would be Billy's first remark. His friend's wit trailed behind him like a comet's tail. But Ed was used to it.

Satisfied with the whistle, he closed his knife and set it aside. Giving it a shrill blast, he laid the whistle beside the knife. Reaching inside his shirt, he took out a tobacco pouch and refilled his pipe. Putting the pouch away he lit the pipe, drew the rich blend of cherry-flavor from it and expelled the smoke. Clenching the pipe between his teeth, he clasped his hands behind his head and relaxed; he sighed wearily, like an old dog disturbed in its sleep.

His gaze took him over and beyond the lake to the color-tinged hills, the ridges barely visible in the lingering haze. Closing his eyes, he recaptured a winter sunset when a brilliant orange-red ball of fire disappeared over the rim of the hills. Opening his eyes he checked on Billy's progress; he was halfway to the lake. Ed's heart went out to his friend, whose movements were painfully slow as he made his way across a dandelion-littered field.

Ed lowered his gaze to the water and the orange-black lilies stemming up between miniature green islands. After a moment or two he reflected on the realities of his present existence.

It's been a good life, he mused. But I wonder if I couldn't've tried harder; left more for my family. Maybe I should sell the farm, give Peg and Paul the money. But inflation eats up everything. Naw! Paul doesn't know anything but farmin', anyway. And the old place has kept us eatin' pretty good over the years. Yesirree. Still, the land, the sun and the changin' seasons prob'ly are the greatest legacy any one could leave. They're too young and busy to notice those things. But they will. They will.

Closing his eyes to savor the warmth, he dug his fingers into the moist soil, knowing that it would soon reclaim him.

*****

A twinge of pain nudged him back to the present. He shook his head, trying to forget. His tired eyes strained against the sun's rays reflecting from the water's surface. His float was nowhere in sight. Grasping his rod, he struggled to his feet.

"Prob'ly another darn perch," he mumbled, carefully making his way down the grassy slope.

A stabbing pain grabbed at him, buckling his knees. He stumbled, almost fell, steadied himself and reached inside his shirt for a pill. Seconds after he swallowed it, the pain subsided.

Peering skyward, he said, "Lord. That one was a lulu. Sure thing. But please be patient, will ya? I ain't goin' anywhere."

Feeling stronger, Ed concentrated on the fish, sensing by the pull that it *wasn't* another small perch. Keeping the line taut, he adjusted the drag on the reel. Then, planting his feet in the muddy soil, he prepared for the contest.

The fish surfaced, jumped clear of the water, then cut across the lake and went deep again. Ed's fingers were stiff and sore from working the reel. But after a few more runs and dives he was able to coax the fish into shallow water. His heart fluttered when he saw its size; the biggest fresh-water bass he'd ever caught. Slipping his fingers through a gill, he lifted it from the water.

"Why, ya gotta go more'n six pounds." He chuckled as he admired the emerald-green iridescence and irregular black stripes. "Ya got away from me once, fish. But you sure didn't this time. Dog gone it! Wait'll Billy sees ya."

Removing the hook, he joined the bass with the perch. "There ya go, fish. Now you've got company."

Hunkering down for a minute, he admired his catch. Standing again, he removed his hat and wiped his brow on his sleeve. The fish strained for release.

"All tuckered out, ain't ya, fish? Well, so am I. So am I." Using his hat to shade his eyes, he peered across the water, searching for Billy. "What a surprise you're in for, Bill." He slapped his hat against his thigh, gleefully anticipating Billy's expression when he saw the bass.

Suddenly a shadow crossed Ed's countenance, erasing the smug grin as he saw Billy struggling through the brush. Since your accident, you're as slow as a cheque in the mail, Ed mused. Suddenly, his expression became watchful and fine-drawn. The space between father and son is like the space between mountains; as the space gets narrow, the love gets greater. So it is with friends.

"Billy boy," he said softly, "I don't have much I can leave ya. But I'm sure not gonna deprive ya of this pleasure." Without a moment's hesitation, Ed released the bass. Stepping back, he watched the fish disappear into the shadowy depths. Billy was temporarily out of sight when Ed sat with his back against the tree.

*****

Five minutes later, walking with a distinctive list to the left, Billy approached the shady glen. Pausing to look at the perch, he said, as Ed knew he would, "Whatcha do, get up before dawn to beat me here? Well, if that miserable li'l perch is the best ya can do, ya oughta hang it up...."

Billy turned to face Ed. "Say! What's the matter with you? Ya look...." His voice dropped several octaves, then trailed off. He stood there, silent, his white hair, as fine as spun glass, poking out from his cap.

"Ed...?" Billy cocked his head, squinting at his buddy as he drew closer. But Ed, although his eyes were open, couldn't see Billy; death had dimmed and set them in infinity focus. His legs were crossed, the corncob pipe was clenched between his teeth and his hand was inside his shirt as though he'd been reaching for something.

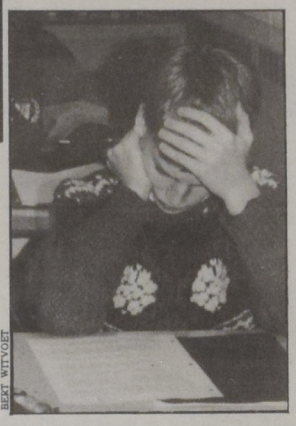
Billy's brown eyes softened as he gazed at his old friend. "Well, well," he said softly. "Gettin' up there before you is like tryin' to sneak dawn past a rooster."

Billy rubbed his hands across his eyes. And in a voice hoarse with emotion, said, "You danged ol' goat. Why'd ya have to go before you snagged that sneaky bass?"

Reaching out, he gently closed the eyelids. "Doc Pinne tol' me about your ailment three days ago. Or ya can be sure I wouldn't have thrown that sneaky bass back for ya to catch and brag about."

Tom Haesche's fiction has appeared in The Knights, St. Joseph's Messenger for the Blind and several youth magazines. He lives in West Haven, Conn.

Help a child read and you get a friend


BERT WITVOET

Lee Hill-Nelson

A poem ends with these lines: *Maybe the world will be a little better because I was important in the life of a child.*

A busy insurance executive in my hometown in Waco, Texas, is important in the life of school children. Two years ago he asked for 1,000 volunteers to work one hour each week tutoring reading and/or math in our schools. Thus began the Waco 1000 program.

> ***"If we are friends with these young people, encourage them to read and help them understand the importance of school, then perhaps the world will be a better place."***

My school-teacher friend told me how much volunteers give to her students and how much the students love volunteers. Reading is also a pleasure in my life; how painful it must be for those who do not read well. I could wait no longer. I joined Waco 1000 at the beginning of the school year.

Elena (not her real name), a third grade Hispanic girl, was assigned to me in October. I was to help her read.

I reported to school anxious to make a difference. First, I wanted to build a relationship, but I warned myself to go slowly.

I was awed. Elena is beautiful; she smiles shyly and keeps her head down most of the time. I asked her age. She said, "Eight."

"I'm 73," I said.

Her big brown eyes roll as she smiles. We are friends.

"She failed the TAAS (Texas Assessment of Academic Skills) test," her teacher said. She suggested we review the test. Elena read the stories well, mispronouncing few words. It was answering the questions afterwards that troubled her. She does not remember much of what she has read.

Imagine flying

The first story was about birds flying to South Texas for the winter. We talked about what it must be like to fly in the sky and look down at the earth. What would we see? Is the weather colder or warmer in the sky?

I see Elena each Monday and we read. Sometimes when she seems a bit tired, I read.

"Is it all right these days to point?" I asked.

"These days we point," said Elena's teacher. "Use bookmarks or whatever makes reading easier."

I have studied Elena's face and wondered about her home life. She told me she has a grandmother, a mother and two younger brothers. Pets are not allowed where she lives.

Is she happy? Does she get enough sleep? Such questions go through my mind as we read together. I may never know the answers.

One day when I came into the room, a big smile crossed her face.

"May I show her my grades?" she asked her teacher. On the computer she showed me titles of two books she'd read. Her grades were two 100s.

We continued to read and talk about the stories. I encouraged her to read slower, to stop at periods, to put emphasis on questions and exclamation points.

I asked her teacher for further advice.

"What you are doing is right," she said.

A second friend

Thanksgiving, Christmas and Elena's birthday came and went. We were told that at the Waco 1000 luncheon it would be all right to give school stuff for gifts. Before Valentine's Day, Elena asked if I would buy her a bookmark for a Valentine present. I bought a bookmark and a book entitled "Too Many Tamales."

To get to know Elena better, I asked her if I could meet her for lunch.

"Eat with *me*, too," said Marcos (not his real name).

"I'll sit between you," I replied.

For the past three visits, Marcos has said, "I want to work with Mrs. Nelson too." Now I have two friends.

He's more wiggly than Elena, has a big-friendly smile — and sucks his thumb. He's African-American, wears his hair braided and has to earrings in one ear. He understands more of what he reads than Elena does, but doesn't pronounce words as well.

COURTESY LEE HILL-NELSON

Lee Hill-Nelson

One day we played games with play money. Marcos counted out $17 and said, "I will give this to the homeless people." Good thinking for an eight-year old.

When I joined Elena and Marcos in the lunch line, Marcos hugged me around the waist — tight — as if he were glad I was there. He was eager to show me where to get my dishes and food.

I give one hour each week to Elena and Marcos. They give much back to me. I'm a long-distance grandmother and grandmothers need children in their lives.

Do you have a volunteer program in your hometown schools? Call a school to find out. Many children have a need for help their teacher does not have time to give.

Maybe, just maybe, if we are friends with these young people, encourage them to read, and work math, and help them understand the importance of school, then perhaps the world will be a better place.

Jesus said, *Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to Me* (Matt.25:40, NKJV).

Lee Hill-Nelson is a freelance writer and literacy volunteer who lives in Waco, Texas.

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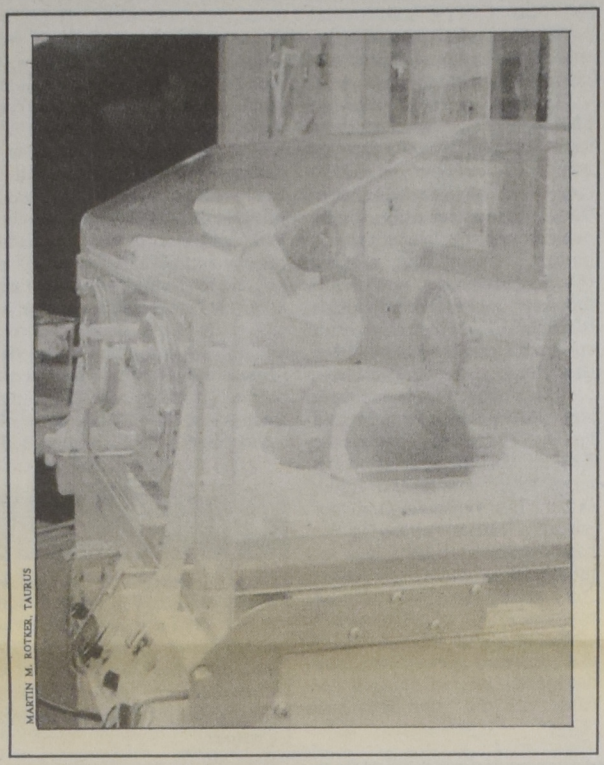
Does genetic engineering exceed our creation mandate? (1)

Wayne W. Bos

Ian Wilmut's successful cloning of a sheep named Dolly sent shock waves throughout the world in February 1997. Thrown anew into the ethicist's lap were the difficult issues pressed by the practice of genetic engineering, that particular one being: "Will we someday be cloning human beings?"

Dolly's presence proved that a mammal could be cloned. If a sheep could be genetically engineered, then could also a human being be cloned? What are the implications of the human clone? Will it have a soul? What will be the effect of raising a clone? What identity will the clone have? Will it be placed into the role of a previous human who perhaps died, the clone taking another's place?

Will the clone have reproductive abilities (Dolly is now being tested to see if she can reproduce)? And what if they don't? Is this process even right in the first place? What does God think of us engineering human life?



MARTIN M. ROTKER, TAURUS

God gives life

It can be argued that God gives life, whether it is in the womb of the married or the promiscuous, the test tube, or by electronically shocking DNA cells together. He may certainly grant the gift of life, but does he approve of all of our methods? God may certainly bless the life of a child born in an illicit union, but the Scripture declares clearly "God will judge the adulterer and the sexually immoral" (Heb. 13:4). He is certainly capable of doing the same for an irresponsible scientist.

Some argue that God would not give us the technology if he didn't intend for us to use it. What if we were to use the same argument for the use of the atomic bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki? We have not been in the habit of regularly using nuclear weapons simply because the technology is available. We are stewards of technology, not sole owners of it.

Christians believe that God ordained marriage. If conception has moved farther from the marriage bed through artificial insemination and now genetic engineering, we will suffer more deeply as a relational people. Already we agonize about broken relationships in a society in which the family has disintegrated. While society researches the cures of physical ailments, we are content to ignore what God's Word has to say about preserving the marital unit that governs the training and emotional well being of children.

Scientists would not want cloning to totally replace natural reproduction, because there are genetic combinations that scientists are incapable of ever reproducing without the natural order. Perhaps this is a convincing argument in itself for leaving much more of the original mandate in God's hand.

Genetic engineering of bodily organs

If it is not ethical to clone the entire individual, perhaps we could content ourselves with part of one. The cloning of body parts may be good news to some 40,000 to 60,000 people who are waiting for organ donors. Depending on how this field is practised, it may have great potential. One often reads the testimonies of those who have lived because of the generosity of a donor.

Before taking the step to thinking about using genetically produced organs, many of us will have to develop our personal convictions regarding organ donation in the present. Some Christians see no problems with organ donation, while others abhor the practice.

The genetic manufacture of human organs is certainly subject to potential abuse. Will a full body be produced and then only certain organs taken from it? What would be the rights of this "harvest-donor"? Can only the needed organ be produced? Will some rich egomaniacs buy human organs or reproduce multiple clones of themselves in a bid to live forever? Another alternative to retrogression may be the age gene that can be manipulated to combat the onslaught of deterioration.

Life-saving process

Sigmund Brouwer's excellent article "High Dive into the Gene Pool" posed the following question. Suppose a mother with a five-year-old daughter who has been diagnosed with leukemia is offered back the girl's life through genetic engineering. The genetic material from the girl's liver (free from the disease) is fused into the woman's unfertilized egg cell. She may then carry to delivery the younger sister. From the clone, the first daughter will obtain a life-saving bone transplant with no risk.

Has God called the parents to allow the child to die, or do they accept the technology available and thank God for the provision of two lovely daughters instead of none? (*Christian Reader*, Sept./Oct.1997, pp. 27-33). To add more confusion to Brouwer's example, we all know that identical twins have differing interests and physical characteristics anyway. Why should we not proceed?

I do not believe there is an easy answer to that question. History records portions of the Christian church refusing to use the radio because it sent broadcasts through the realm of "the prince of the power of the air." Nineteenth century preachers such as Dwight L. Moody condemned the invention of the bicycle in their sermons because youth rode them on Sunday instead of praying. Others have refused glasses and antibiotics in Jesus' name. This is unbalanced.

I am deeply concerned about the implications of this new technology, but I am equally afraid of being one who closes his mind to its benefits. It is easy to condemn the more horrid abuses of genetic engineering, but it may be truly difficult to think through these matters when they have such potential for good.

The Christian theology of death informs some of our replies. In our future state we will indeed have resurrection bodies provided by God. For us, death is not something to flee from. We do not need to keep replacing organs, for us to live is Christ and to die is gain (Phil. 1:21). To leave our earthly tent is only to gain a heavenly building (2 Cor. 5:1-2). When genetic engineering becomes an attempt at immortality apart from the cross, then it is most certainly to be condemned.

The opposing argument is that Christians are also known as champions of abundant life (John 10:10). To actually want to be martyred because one wanted to prematurely enter

What controls will be placed on cloning? What does God think of us engineering human life?

Christ's presence was nauseating to the early church fathers. So today, willingly refusing solid medical treatment is ludicrous. The Lord preserved the sandals and clothing of the Israelites as they wandered in the wilderness, but when they entered the Promised Land they again had to make their own garments.

God provides for us miraculously when we are not able to help ourselves, but when the provision is readily available he expects us to use wisdom and not presumption. Our future dilemma will certainly be in knowing when to accept the medical help of the day and when not to.

(Second and final instalment next week.)

Wayne Bos is a freelance write who has studied theology and genetic engineering. He lives in Edmonton.

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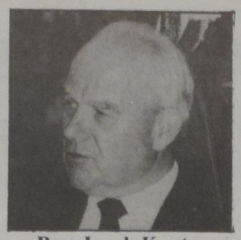

Rev. Jacob Kuntz

Holy Communion in the Salvation Army

An International Spiritual Life Commission was convened by the general of the Salvation Army "to examine and identify essential aspects of the Army's life. The commission's report was published in the War Cry *of June 6, 1998.*

We know that the sacraments do not have the same place and function among them as they do in other Protestant denominations. But what are their views on Baptism and Lord's Supper? To give our readers an impression we pass on the statement on Holy Communion:

"After full and careful consideration of The Salvation Army's understanding and approach to the sacrament of holy Communion, the International Spiritual Life Commission sets out the following points:

"1. God's grace is freely and readily accessible to all people at all times and in all places.

"2. No particular outward observance is necessary to inward grace.

"3. The Salvation Army believes that unity of the Spirit exists within diversity and rejoices in the freedom of the Spirit in expressions of worship.

"4. When Salvationists attend other Christian gatherings in which a form of holy communion is included, they may partake if they choose to do so, and if the host church allows.

"5. Christ is the one true sacrament, and sacramental living — Christ living in us and through us — is at the heart of Christian holiness and discipleship.

"6. Throughout its history, the Salvation Army has kept Christ's atoning sacrifice at the centre of its corporate worship.

"7. The Salvation Army rejoices in its freedom to celebrate Christ's real presence at all meals and in all meetings, and in its opportunity to explore in life together the significance of the simple meals shared by Jesus and his friends and by the first Christians.

"8. Salvationists are encouraged to use the love feast and develop creative means of hallowing meals in home and corps with remembrance of the Lord's sacrificial love.

"9. The Salvation Army encourages the development of resources for fellowship meals, which will vary according to culture, without ritualizing particular words or actions.

"10. In accordance with normal Salvation Army practice, such remembrances and celebrations, where observed, will not become established rituals, nor will frequency be prescribed."

Winning the game

"Winning isn't everything," writes John Redekop in the Mennonite Brethren Herald *of May 1. (You woudn't say that as you watch some of the soccer games in the fight for the World Cup). He enjoys sports competitions, but believes that winning "has been lifted out of its context and redefined, given a distorted meaning." He sees here a "clearly anti-Christian emphasis":*

"Preoccupation with winning sets aside the time-honored emphasis on running the race well.

"I think it was one of Shakespeare's characters who said, 'It matters not whether you win or lose but how you run the race.' The obvious wisdom in these words is set aside. Doing one's best is no longer the important thing; only winning counts. No wonder many children and adults, in many areas of life, who obviously can't come first, are discouraged from doing the best that they can.

"The emphasis on 'winning at any cost' teaches a wrong moral lesson: The end justifies the means. For Ben Johnson, it meant taking steroids. For figure skater Tanya Harding, it apparently meant arranging to have Nancy Kerrigan's legs injured with a club.

"Focusing only on winning teaches a faulty understanding of the basis for self-esteem. In this distorted new ethic, you don't think well of yourself because you did your best; you think well of yourself if, by whatever means it took, you came in first. The inevitable result of such a mindset is that millions of mediocre pee wee players in hockey, soccer, baseball and other sports have difficulty thinking highly of themselves. They have been taught that those who do not and cannot excel are of little value....

"The overemphasis on winning ranks people according to a trait which they cannot control and for which they are not responsible. It categorizes people and brings in divisions where these should not exist.

"In God's family, there is neither 'Greek nor Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, male nor female,' revered winner or losing athlete (Col. 3:11, Gal. 3:28). All are equal in God's sight.

"While in our day athletic winners and the bulk of society tend to assign all non-winning participants to an inferior status, and increasingly inferior the farther back in the pack they happen to be, the church, reflecting the mind of God, should resist all such tendencies. After all, Christians know that, in more than one respect, "the last shall be first."

Jews and Christians

In the United Church a report was recently prepared on "United Church — Jewish Relations Today." Christians are encouraged to maintain a friendly dialogue with Jews and not to engage in evangelizing them. The UC moderator (who was involved in the preparation of the document) does not want Christians to think they have a superior faith (See ChristianWeek, *June 9). The editor of* ChristianWeek *made some positive and negative comments on that report:*

"It was most encouraging to see that a major reason for producing the document is to combat anti-Semitism and to confront Christian complicity in programs, the Holocaust and other horrors against Jewish people....

"But I failed to recognize my own Christian background in some of the other reasons cited by the authors, such as 'because in our churches Jesus is rarely referred to as a Jew.' The Jewishness of Jesus is frequently affirmed in my worship circles, as is the right of Jewish people to a just and peaceful existence both in Israel and in their communities around the world.

"Much of the document itself comprises a tour of the New Testament books with a special focus on 'problematic passages,' i.e., verses with anti-Judaism potential. Some of these discussions, I discovered, reveal as much about contemporary UC theologizing as they do about the texts themselves."

"The denomination does its members a disservice of abandoning the call to Christian mission. Those who believe salvation is offered through faith in Jesus Christ have been commissioned to share the good news....

"Alex Torm, who headed the Danish Israel Mission from 1945-1975, put it this way: 'In earlier times the church disparaged Judaism in order to elevate Christ. Today there are people in the church who disparage Christ in order to glorify Judaism. Is that better?'"

A thank you for Billy Graham

*Good words about Billy Graham were written by Orville James in his "Ministry in Motion" column (*United Church Observer, *June 1998). He knows that "not many of us in the UC are big fans of Billy Graham." But his own view is that "many in the mainline churches have a lot to learn from Billy Graham" — a statement to be taken to heart by all churches in Canada where (in Ottawa) Graham conducts his (perhaps last) Canadian Crusade.*

"Graham has engaged in a ministry of reconciliation. In his travels, most of his time and energy were spent trying to tear down barriers separating people who might, if given a chance, be friends. In Ireland, India, South Africa and Korea, Graham acted, sometimes at great risk, as a living symbol and active agent of reconciliation. In the 1950s he refused to conduct racially segregated Crusades. In the '70s he went to Belfast to initiate dialogue between Protestant and Catholic leaders.

"Graham has kept his integrity. He put himself and his staff on fair fixed salaries. To avoid even a whisper of sexual scandal, he's never alone in a room with a woman.

"Graham has remained humbly passionate for God. 'I have in many ways failed,' he says. 'I haven't lived a life of devotion, meditation and prayer. Doing it over I would have studied and prayed even more.'

"Graham has grown and matured in his theology. 'I preached Americanism too much. I began to realize we are not the Kingdom of God....' He has broadened his view and softened his heart toward all faiths....

"Graham consistently called all to repentance and commitment to God. In much of mainline Protestant Christianity a perception has developed that people in the establishment are always sinful, the marginalized are always victims, and justice activists are 'saved' and co-Saviors with 'Jesus the liberator.'

"Consciously or not, Graham has rejected this limited thinking. He knows that the rich and powerful are sinful, but so are the middle class and the poor. A Gospel without social change is irrelevant, but a Gospel without conversion is impotent. 'You know,' says Graham, 'social policy changes are important, they certainly help, but the key is the human heart.'

"So, Billy, I thank you...: for preaching and living a life of Godly holiness and gracious love. And I pray that sometime soon for the next century, God will raise up another prophet with honor."

Jacob Kuntz is a retired Christian Reformed pastor in Brampton, Ont.

Advice

Are schooling costs part of tithing?

Dear P & M:

In the fall our oldest child will be starting Christian high school. We also have children attending Christian elementary school. As you know, this will be a very costly time, with double tuition payments.

We have always tithed 10 per cent of our income for the church and have managed to pay for Christian education on top of this. But come this fall, we will not be able to handle tithing and double tuition. Our question is this: Do you consider Christian education costs as part of the tithe?

We have heard both sides of the argument: Christian education is Kingdom work preparing young minds for Christian service; and others say Christian education is a personal choice for personal benefits. What is your opinion?

Dear Costly Time:

This is an issue with which many families struggle as their children move up through the grades from kindergarten to elementary school, from high school to a Christian college. Financially, your budget keeps taking a bigger hit and you wonder how you can keep up your other commitments.

We commend you for your attitude about tithing. Like the Corinthian Christians, you have given "as much as you were able and even beyond your ability" (2 Cor. 8:3). In your case, you have managed to keep on giving 10 per cent over and above your Christian School tuition. God has blessed you to be able to do this.

What is the biblical history of the tithe? The concept of tithing is introduced early on in the Bible. Abraham gave a tenth of his possessions when God enabled him to rescue his nephew, Lot, from some warring kings. Jacob promised a tenth after God promised him descendants and land at a place called Bethel. In Canaan, Jewish landowners left 10 per cent of their crops unharvested for orphans, widows and foreigners. And, in Malachi 3:10 the Lord invited his people to test him and bring their whole tithe into the storehouse.

There is, however, something you need to realize about the biblical concept of tithing. It is a suggested guideline, based on our ability, which covers all the Kingdom needs that the Christian community attempts to meet. One cannot infer from Scripture that this 10 per cent is meant exclusively for the local church or denomination.

Now what about the argument that Christian education is a personal choice for personal benefits? The fact is that Christian education is neither a personal luxury nor a private system for the rich. We are not buying an education but supporting the Christian discipling of our youth. It is our communal responsibility as we help each other keep our baptismal vows to raise our children to know and love the Lord. Its expense, therefore, is to be understood as part of the monies we set aside so that Christ's Kingdom will come and his will may be done in and through the lives of our children.

Giving is a thankful response to God's blessings, a joyful act of worship to our generous God. It is to be done obediently, not grudgingly. "The Lord loves a cheerful giver." But cheerful giving means manageable giving, i.e. "as we are able." A community that promotes Christian education and cares for its members needs to be flexible and understand that 10 per cent is a guideline, not a quota.

Our congregation's "First Fruits" committee dealt with this very question and produced a tithing guideline for our members. It says: "Realizing that there are those who struggle to make ends meet and/or pay tuition for Christian schools, we propose that we allow everyone a $20,000 'cost of Christian living exemption.' Some statistical work convinced us that our budget needs would easily be met if we would tithe on our combined incomes above that level."

As a result, those who have less income and/or greater "Christian living" expenses are asked for less; those who make more are asked for more. As Paul says, "The gift is acceptable according to what one has, not according to what he does not have. Our desire is not that others might be relieved while you are hard pressed, but that there might be equality" (2 Cor. 8:12,13). Since adopting these guidelines three years ago our congregation's financial situation has improved to the point that we were finally able to contribute 100 per cent to our denominational ministry shares last year.

For your information, we are reprinting our church's tithing guideline alongside this column. Experiment with it, see where you fit, and discover the joy of giving at a level that allows you to live your life cheerfully.

Write to: P & M, 16 Kimbermount Drive, St. Catharines, ON L2N 5V6.

Peter and Marja Slofstra are a pastor and wife team living in St. Catharines, Ont. They are assisted by an advisory panel consisting of Herman de Jong, Bill Lidkea, Alan Vandermaas, Marian Van Til and Bert Witvoet.

Tithing guidelines for Jubilee Fellowship Christian Reformed Church, St. Catharines:

Combined Yearly	Minus $20,000 Exemption	Yearly Tithe (10%) on Income Minus Exemption	Weekly Gift $	Monthly Gift $
up to 10,000	--	Do what you can	1.00 or more	5.00
15,000	—	According to ability	5.00	22.50
20,000	—	But decide an amount	7.50	32.50
25,000	5,000	500	9.62	41.67
30,000	10,000	1,000	19.23	83.83
35,000	15,000	1,500	28.85	125.00
40,000	20,000	2,000	38.46	166.67
45,000	25,000	2,500	48.08	208.33
50,000	30,000	3,000	57.69	250.00
55,000	35,000	3,500	67.31	291.67
60,000	40,000	4,000	76.92	333.33
65,000	45,000	4,500	86.54	375.00
70,000	50,000	5,000	96.15	416.67
75,000	55,000	5,500	105.77	458.33
80,000	60,000	6,000	115.38	500.00
85,000	65,000	6,500	125.00	541.67
90,000	70,000	7,000	134.61	583.33
95,000	75,000	7,500	144.23	625.00
Etc.	Etc.	Etc.	Etc. and then	somel

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We join you in praising God for this miracle.

For the Board, staff and students of the INSTITUTE FOR CHRISTIAN STUDIES

ICS

Harry Fernhout
President

Classifieds

Classified Rates

(Revised February 1, 1995)

Births	$25.00
Marriages & Engagements	$40.00
Anniversaries	$45.00
2-column anniversaries	$90.00
Obituaries	$45.00
Notes of thanks	$35.00
Birthdays	$40.00

All other one-column classified advertisements: $15.00 per column inch. NOTE: Minimum fee is $15.00. Letter under file number $35.00 extra. Photos: $25.00 additional charge.

Note: All rates shown above are GST inclusive

ATTENTION!

a) *Christian Courier* reserves the right to print classifieds using our usual format.,

b) A sheet with information about an obituary sent by funeral homes is *not* acceptable since it leads to errors and confusion.

c) Photographs sent by fax *are not* acceptable. If you wish a photo included, send us the original.

d) *Christian Courier* will not be responsible for any errors due to handwritten or phoned-in advertisements.

e) The rate shown above for classifieds covers any length up to five column inches. *Christian Courier* reserves the right to charge for additional column inches at the rate of $15.00 per column inch (GST incl.).

NEWLYWEDS & NEW PARENTS

We offer a one-year subscription for only $25.00 (GST incl.) to the couples whose wedding is announced in the *Christian Courier* and to the parents of the child whose birth announcement appears in our paper. To facilitate matters, we encourage those who request the wedding or birth announcement to enclose $25.00 and the couple's correct address.

Christian Courier
4-261 Martindale Rd.
St. Catharines, ON L2W 1A1
Phone: (905) 682-8311
Fax: (905) 682-8313

E-mail: ccadverts@aol.com

Please note:

There will be **no issue** on

JULY 10, 1998

Birthdays

Congratulations to Mrs. Alie Oegema on her 90th birthday!

OEGEMA:

On Sunday, July 5, 1998, the Lord willing, our mother

MRS. ALIE OEGEMA
(nee DRENTH)

hopes to celebrate her 90th birthday. We thank God for all these years given to her and pray that He will bless Mom and continue to keep her in His care.

Joyce & Ronald De Jong — St. Thomas, Ont.
Heiko & Helen Oegema — Talbotville, Ont.
Ann & Chris Vanderveen — Brantford, Ont.
Tom & Maria Oegema — Talbotville, Ont.
Henry Oegema — Abbotsford, B.C.
Hans & Dorothy Oegema — London, Ont.
Ada & John Diemer — Belleville, Ont.

18 grandchildren and eight great-grandchildren.

Mom's address is: Shalom Manor, 12 Bartlett Ave., Grimsby, ON L3M 4N5

Thank You

VANDONKERSGOED:

I would like to thank everyone for making my 90th birthday special. Thank you for the cards, phone calls, and visits.

Aaltje VanDonkersgoed

Personal

ONE TO ANOTHER
Christian companion magazine.
Hundreds of readers Canada-wide.
Single issue $5.
Write to:
#12 923 2nd Ave. S.
Lethbridge, AB T1J 0C7

Marriages

DEVUYST/VANDEBURGT:

Believing that God has brought our children together, we, the parents, Anne (and the late Bert) de Vuyst, and Herman and Betty Vanderburg (VandeBurgt) joyfully announce the marriage celebration of their children

SHARON JOY DEVUYST
and
IAN FRANCOIS VANDEBURGT

on Saturday, July 18, 1998, at 11 a.m., at the home of Mother Anne in Calgary.

"Seek the Lord and His strength, Seek His face evermore" (Ps. 105:4).

Future address: 1635 - 34th Avenue, S.W., Apt. #6, Calgary, AB T2T 2B5

Birthdays

MULLER:

Congratulations to Gertrude Muller on her 90th birthday.

Congratulations to our mother, grandmother, and great-grandmother

GERTRUDE MULLER
(nee LUININGA)

on the occasion of her 90th birthday on June 29, 1998.

We give thanks to God for this special day.

Jim & Joyce Beukens
Edna & Art May
Bernice & Cliff Hull
Harry & Barb Muller
Ken & Shirl Muller
Larry & Ciska Muller
Russ & Dawn Muller
Robert (deceased) & Janice Muller

Home address: Menno Home West 2, 32910 Brundige, Abbotsford, BC V2S 1N2

Look for **Peter and Marja** on page 15...

Anniversaries

Telkwa, B.C. Telkwa, B.C.
1958 July 21 1998

"I lift up my eyes to the hills — where does my help come from? My help comes from the Lord, the maker of heaven and earth" (Ps. 121:1,2).

We rejoice in being able to celebrate our parents' and grandparents' 40th anniversary.

JOHN and LENY
BOONSTRA
(nee WINKELMAN)

John & Joanne Wisselink
Rachel, Justin, Joshua, Reuben, Tianna
John & Lauri Boonstra
Karen, Debbie, Jason, Jolene, Krisa, Kevin
Rick & Verna Boonstra
Amy-Lou, Glen, Lisa, Wendy, Jesse, Faye
Ed & Heather Boonstra
Laynna
John & Monica Geertsma
Corey, Kyler, Kalen
Stanley & Maria Boonstra
Marvin & Carol Boonstra
Rebecca, Mark, Jessica
Floyd Boonstra
Nellie Boonstra
Nateesha
Wesley Boonstra

We thank our God for you, and love you!!!

Address: R.R. #1, S16 C8, Telkwa, BC V0J 2X0

"Rejoice in the Lord always, I will say it again: Rejoice!" (Phil. 4:4).

JACK and LENIE BROUWER
(nee VOGEL)

We will be celebrating our parents' 50th wedding anniversary on Sunday, July 20, 1998.

We want to thank them for being such an inspiration to us. Their love and dedication to family, friends and each other is a wonderful testimony of God's love.

We wish you many more years together!

Marianne & John
Jessica & Tim, Robert
Rob & Teresa
Michael, David, Matthew
John & Wren
Samantha
Andrew & Michele

Home address: 27 Alpaca Dr., Scarborough, ON M1J 2Z8

For Rent

St. Catharines, Ont.: Bright basement room. Suitable for student. Shared entrance, separate bath, fridge, stove, cable TV, laundry facilities. Piano and organ available for practice. $325.00 monthly. Available Sept. 1998.

Call (905) 937-3367

Anniversaries

1958 July 12 1998

REEL and BINY
VAN EGMOND
(nee HUNSE)

"Give thanks to the Lord; for he is good; his love endures forever" (Ps.118:29).

With praise and thanks to our God and Father, we celebrate with our parents and grandparents, their 40th wedding anniversary. With thankful hearts we thank the Lord for all the blessings he has given them.

Thank you Mom and Dad for the love you continually show us, children and grandchildren. Thank you for the example of a happy marriage that you have set for us. We love you.

With love and prayers for God's continued blessing,

Miriam & Ed Koopman — Burlington, Ont.
Heather
Lydia & Ted Van Huizen — St. Catharines, Ont.
Michael, David, Jeffrey, Corey, Brandon
Grace & John Kennedy — Toronto, Ont.
Kathleen, Lane, and ?

Address: 20 Heywood Ave., St. Catharines, ON L2M 2M8

Miscellaneous

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714 Vine St. St. Catharines ON
L2M 6Z6 Tel 905-935-5047

Classifieds

Anniversaries

1953 1998

With grateful hearts we thank God for our parents and grandparents. They will be celebrating their 45th wedding anniversary on July 16, 1998.

EVERT and KLAZIENA WASSINK
(nee VAN HARTEN)

Congratulations and love from your children and grandchildren.

Connie & Francis VanRooyen — Woodstock, Ont.
Randal & Julie, Danielle, Christa & Tim, Jarend, Carl
John & Carol Wassink — Leduc, Alta.
Janelle, Derrick, Derwyn, Marcel, Emily
Diana Wassink & Bill Zylstra — Sarnia, Ont.
Mike & Rachel (Trent), Dave, Arlin, Chad, Robyn, Manuel, Ruella, Juanita
Margaret & Al Groenewold — San Marcos, Calif.
Jevon, Karena, Janeen, Tyler
Dick Wassink & Janette Winter-Wassink — Forest, Ont.
Ada, Ian, Lea, Zoe
Clarence & Alice Wassink — London, Ont.
Taryn, Justin, Bradley, Kendra
Otto & Gracia Wassink — Ayr, Ont.
Kamara, Jaben, Caleb, Megan
Evelyn & Henry Dreise — Mossley, Ont.
Mitchel, Camilla
Arno & Kathy Wassink — Kitchener, Ont.
Matthew, Jordan

Afternoon tea to be held at their home on Saturday, July 18, 1998, from 2-4 p.m. Best wishes only please.

Home address: R.R. 6, Forest, ON N4S 7V8

Obituaries

On June 3, 1998, the Lord took home

RINNY GERRITS

wife of Bill Gerrits.

Sister-in-law of:
Henk & Dina Wittenberg — Kentville, N.S.
Albert & Janna Gerrits — Canning, N.S.
Jack & Hennie Gerrits — Centreville, N.S.
Joe & Janny Gerrits — Kentville, N.S.
Don & Sinny Van der Laan — Waterdown, Ont.
Chris & Tina Rombaut — Canning, N.S.
Gerry & Barbara Gerrits — Coldbrook, N.S.
John & Arlene Gerrits — Centreville, N.S.
James & Linda Gerrits — Canning, N.S.

Obituaries

Akkerwoude, Fr. Simcoe
the Neth. Ont.
Oct. 20, 1914 - June 10, 1998

"The Lord will keep you from all harm, He will watch over your life; the Lord will watch over your coming and going both now and forevermore" (Ps.121:7-8).

After a life of praising our Lord

SJOUKJE DE VRIES
(nee JANSMA)

went to be with her Lord and Savior. Predeceased by her husband Oeds (1979) and grandson Andrew (1965).

Dear Mem of:
Marilyn & Martin Kloet — Simcoe, Ont.
Jessie & George Visser — Simcoe, Ont.
Klaas & Anna DeVries — Townsend, Ont.
Jacob & Barb DeVries — LW. Sackville, N.S.
Berend & Jane DeVries — Jarvis, Ont.
Tilly & Peter Vandersar — Embro, Ont.
Eleanor & Ken Esson — Sherwood Park, Alta.

Dearly loved grandmother of 24 grandchildren and great-grandmother of 21 great-grandchildren.

The funeral was held on June 12, 1998, at the Ebenezer Chr. Ref. Church, Jarvis, Ont., with Pastor Ray Vander Kooij officiating.

Correspondence address:
Marilyn Kloet, 3 Kelly Avenue, Simcoe, ON N3Y 4V6

South Bay Picton
Ont. Ont.
Dec. 2, 1954 - May 26, 1998

"The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God stands forever" (Is.40:8).

After a two-year battle with IGA Myeloma, God in his infinite wisdom called home his servant

GERTIE LOIS WIERSTRA
(nee BOSMA)

at the age of 43.

Loving wife of Edward Wierstra.
Dear mother of Emile and Christina.
Dear stepmother of Maria, Anna Lisa, and Patricia.
Survived by her parents, Geert and Ena Bosma.
Also survived by her brother and sisters,
Tina (Hank Hiddink) — Bloomfield, Ont.
Albert (Wilma) — Stockdale, Ont.
Rebecca (Dale Insley) — Picton, Ont.
Also missed by many nieces and nephews. The funeral service was held on May 28, 1998, at the Bethany Chr. Ref. Church, Bloomfield, Ont., Pastor H. Newhouse officiated.

Correspondence address:
Geert Bosma, R.R. #3, Picton, ON K0K 2T0

For Rent

Students, are you planning to study in **London, Ont.**, next year (University of Western Ontario or Fanshawe College) and needing a place to stay? We offer housing that is close to both institutions and would welcome inquiries. Please feel free to contact us by phone: **(519) 660-0922** evenings, **(519) 672-9217** days, fax: **(519) 672-3140** or e-mail: **talsma@skyia.com**

Teachers

GUELPH, Ont.: John Calvin Chr. School invites applications for a **possible full-time Grade 2 teaching position** for the 1998-1999 school year. Interested applicants may forward a letter of application and resume to:

Jake Vriend, Principal
John Calvin Christian School
290 Water St.
Guelph, ON N1G 1B8

PETERBOROUGH, Ont.: Rhema Chr. School, a denominationally diverse elementary school of 200 students, is seeking applicants for **possible junior grade teaching positions**. Due to growth in student numbers, there is the **possibility of one full-time and one part-time position**. If you are a qualified Christian teacher, interested in joining our dynamic Christian staff, please send a resume to:

Mr. Ray Hendriks, Principal
3195 Parkhill Rd. E.
Peterborough, ON
K9L 1B8

ST. CATHARINES, Ont.: Calvin Memorial Chr. School invites applications for a **full-time position**, most likely in **Grade 5**, for the 1998-99 school year. We are looking for a candidate who demonstrates a deep love for the Lord, has a Biblical vision for curriculum and pedagogy, and is creative and dynamic in teaching and interacting with students. Please call for more information or send a resume, including a statement explaining your understanding of Christian education, to:

Mrs. Karen Gerritsma, Principal
Calvin Memorial Chr. School
300 Scott St.
St. Catharines, ON L2N 1J3
(905) 937-6302

Deadline for applications is July 6,1998.

More Teacher ads on page 18...

Miscellaneous

Route Sales Trainee

We require a responsible, self-motivated, person to train for the wholesale route sales of our excellent line of floral products. Candidates with some knowledge of horticulture preferred. Excellent driving record essential.

If you meet these criteria please contact Brian van Staalduinen at 1-800-263-6815 to arrange an interview.

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• send printed or typed copy
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Thank you.

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Name _____

Address _____

City/Town Code _____

P.S. If possible, glue your label in this space, or enclose it. Send to:
4-261 Martindale Rd., St. Catharines, ON L2W 1A1

Classifieds

Teachers

WALLACEBURG, Ont.: Wallaceburg Chr. School, a 100-student, K-8 school, is seeking applications for a Grade 7 and 8 teacher for the 1998/1999 school year.
Please call **(519) 683-6068** for more details or send applications to:
Wayne Hooyer
R.R. #6
Dresden, ON N0P 1M0

Miscellaneous

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Miscellaneous

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9:30 a.m. and a repeat in evening
Sponsored by Voortman Cookies

Miscellaneous

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11 exciting days
October 19 - October 29, 1998

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Plus departure tax

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Fax: (905) 542-0154; Home (905) 824-5074

Christian Courier is throwing caution to the wind and extending a special introductory subscription to people under 40. You may be a newlywed, a student, a single person or a couple with or without kids. As long as you are somewhere between adolescence and middle age, you may subscribe at the ridiculously low price of

$23.50 (GST included)

Parents: Are your grown-up kids subscribing? If not, why not surprise them with a gift subscription at this low price — 46% below the regular value!

This exceptional offer has been made possible partly through the generosity of a group of friends who believe that the Reformed perspective needs to be kept alive among young Christians. The discounted price applies only to persons who have not subscribed before. Act now! The offer is limited to the first 200 new subscribers. Send us the complete coupon and a $23.50 cheque soon.

Wouldn't YOU be happy with our offer?

COUPON COUPON

Please enter my subscription for one year immediately.
I enclose a cheque for $23.50, payable to Christian Courier.

Name _____

Address _____

City/town **Code** _____

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Burlington, ON L7R 3Y8

Miscellaneous

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R. Vander Ploeg Secr./Treas.
37 Brick Pond Lane
Woodstock, ON N4V 1G1
Phone: (519) 539-2117

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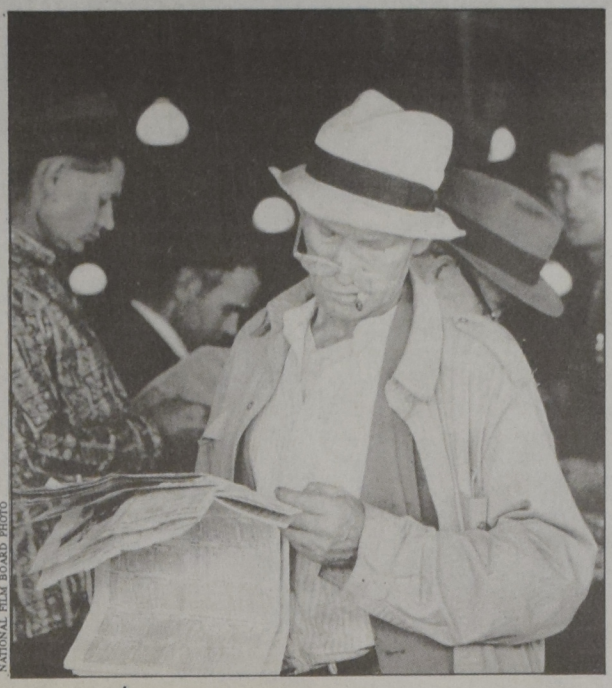

NATIONAL FILM BOARD PHOTO

Marcia Dykstra

Recently I accompanied a friend to Quebec City. With an afternoon of leisure time to fill I bought an ice cream cone and some Canada Dry to settle down on the steps of Saint Roch Catholic Church to read a book.

I had read only a couple of pages when a gentleman in his 50s greeted me in French. I apologized for not understanding the language and he quickly changed to fluent English, commenting on the warm weather. He introduced himself as *"JJ"* and before long we were busy in conversation. What was unusual about JJ was that he is a panhandler, a street person... and I suppose a con man of sorts.

His "ownership" of Saint Roch charmed me, and he was eager to give a tour of it. His favorite station was the painting in which Jesus, while on the cross, presented John the apostle to Mary as her son and Mary to John as his mother. JJ, with what I believe was sincere passion, explained this bestowal as being significant to the human race since it was Mary's calling to be Holy Mother to all of us.

He bragged of a son who was employed as an engineer in Ontario and of a daughter (Claire) who plays piano in Vienna. He asked that I wait on the steps while he ran and fetched a home-made cassette tape of her music for me to have. He boasted of another daughter who was about to take a violin exam in England where she teaches music. Indeed, he pulled a dog-eared day minder out of his pocket and showed me the date to prove it. He beamed with pride about how well his children had done. I asked if his children ever came to visit him in Quebec. He said they are all very busy and hard working, pride never leaving his face.

I hadn't expected to stay around so long but eventually he asked what he was looking for... $30 to purchase cigarettes. I spotted him enough cash to buy two packages of cigarettes and asked if I could buy him a sandwich. He wasn't interested and we parted ways.

When I relayed this story to my friend, he asked "So what did JJ do for *you*?"

Living near and often visiting Toronto, I had experienced street people several times near and around the corner of King and Church streets. I think all of us, Christian or not, have an uncomfortable and mysterious mixture of shame, fear and possibly helplessness when we realize we are going to be approached by a person who lives on the street. Although not always on a conscious level, I often feel a slight relief when the moment passes. I must believe this tug-of-war feeling is God's spirit at work in ours when we see someone pitiable.

I don't know how much JJ's story is real. Do the children he spoke of really exist? If so, do they live in Vienna, England and Ontario and have the reputable employment he spoke of? Perhaps... perhaps not. To me it doesn't matter. What I know is that in a few short hours I developed a relationship with this "gentle man." And I believe it was sincere.

What JJ did for me was he took away, at least for that afternoon, fear of homeless people. When sharing his company that fear was never there. Never did I feel at risk, find this man a bother or wish the moment to be over with. I was able to share my faith, laugh with him and learn from him.

I am grateful to him and to God for that experience.

Marcia Dykstra is a member of Brampton Second Chr. Ref. Church who enjoys the pastime of choral singing.

Calendar of Events

Please submit only brief items. Placement is subject to space availability. Lengthy, multiple-event announcements will be rejected. We reserve the right to edit the material and to charge a nominal, per issue fee per item inserted.

July 3,4,5,10.11.12 "The Promise," a musical pageant on the life of Christ. Do not miss this event! At the Forest Amphitheatre, **Forest**, Ont. Bring lawnchair and blanket! Gate opens at 7:30 p.m.. performance at 8:30 p.m. Info.: 1-800-265-0316. (#)

July 8 "Hollandse Dag," 10 a.m., Caradoc Community Centre, **Mount Brydges**, Ont. Speaker: Rev. H. Bergsma.

July 12 Dutch worship service led by Rev. Peter Van Egmond, 3 p.m., CRC, 70 Hwy. 53 E., **Ancaster**, Ont.

July 13-18 Summerfest: A Learning Vacation for the Whole Family. Theme: "Crossing Cultures Through Words and Images." At the campus of Calvin College, **Grand Rapids**, Mich. For info. call (616) 957-6801 or E-mail: rvbroek@calvin.edu (#)

July 13-31 ICS/Wycliffe-sponsored Summer School, 229 College St., **Toronto**, Ont. For more info. contact John Franklin at (416) 979-2331. Toll free 1-888-326-5347. E-mail: franklin@ultratech.net

to July 31 All seniors in Niagara (+60) are invited to enjoy a complimentary day of fishing (or relax and bring a picnic lunch in a park-like setting). Senior days run during July/98. Call ahead to book your day. Phone Desy's Fish Farm, **Welland**, Ont., tel. (905) 892-8990 or fax (905) 892-1797. (#)

Aug. 7-10 ICS Ontario Summer Conference, featuring Dr. Bob Goudzwaard on the theme: "Proclaim Jubilee: A New Beginning." At the Maple Grove Christian Retreat Centre, **Thamesford**, Ont. Info.: (416) 979-2331 or e-mail: ics@icscanada.edu

to Sept. 11 A major 15-yr. retrospective art exhibition by George Langbroek. At the Rodman Hall Arts Centre, 109 St. Paul Cr., **St. Catharines**, Ont. Info.: (905) 684-2925.

Sept. 24-26 CLAC/WRF-sponsored conference exploring christian perspectives on shaping the workplace. At the Holiday Inn, **Burlington**, Ont. Plenary speakers: Don Posterski, Harry Antonides, Lee Hardy, Elwin Beukes and Marc Bacon. Free public presentation with Dr. John Bolt on Frid., Sept. 25, on: "Greed, Goodness, and God - Hope for Canada's Bottom Line." Info.: (905) 670-7386 or vist web page: www.interlog.com/~wrf/cwuf.htm

Sept. 26 Toronto District Chr. High School's 35th Anniversary Celebration Dinner! All friends of TDCH are invited to attend this event at the school, **Woodbridge**, Ont. Tickets $35, order through the school office beginning May 1, 1998. Tel. (905) 851-1772.

Oct.11 First CRC, **Owen Sound**, Ont. celebrates its 50th anniversary! Variety program on Friday. Homecoming tea/dinner on Saturday. Special service on Sunday. Info.: Linda DeBoer (519) 371-8192. (#)

Nov. 6 Christian Festival Concert by the choirs and brass of the O.C.M.A., Leendert Kooij, director. Guest artists: Andre Knevel, Sander van Marion, Lisette Emmink, the Kooij sisters, and the Concert Band "Euphonia." At 8 p.m., Roy Thomson Hall, **Toronto**, Ont. Info./tickets: (416) 636-9779. (#)

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CALVIN THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

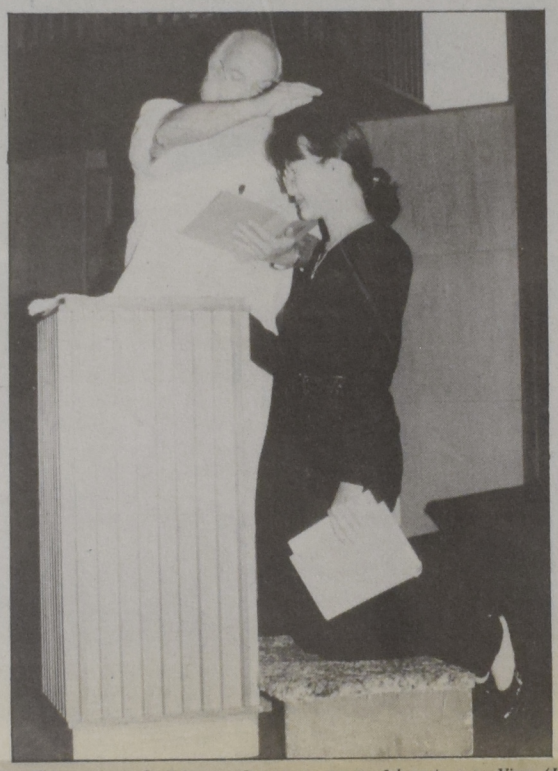
Buddhist student turns to flesh and blood Savior

Bert Witvoet

HAMILTON, Ont. — Coming from China to Canada in 1993 resulted in more than Ying (Ingrid) Zhang's request of the Canadian government to stay here, and for her husband and daughter, then still in China, to be able to join her. The McMaster University student ended up seeking entrance into the Kingdom of Heaven as well. On Sunday, June 21, Ingrid and her daughter, Haiyun (Marina), were baptized in the First Christian Reformed Church of Hamilton, while her husband, Hongqi (Edward) Wang watched and promised support.

Becoming a Christian had not been Ingrid's intent when she left China. She had read the Bible before leaving, but that was done mostly to help her understand North American culture. Being an upwardly mobile Buddhist with little interest in the Christian God, she thought her religion was sufficient for a person who relied on her own strength anyway.

That was before the immigration process frustrated her, and before she met Aren Geisterfer, Christian Reformed chaplain at McMaster University.



PHOTOS: BERT WITVOET

Aren Geisterfer administers the sacrament of baptism to Ying (Ingrid) Zhang.

Her eyes were opened

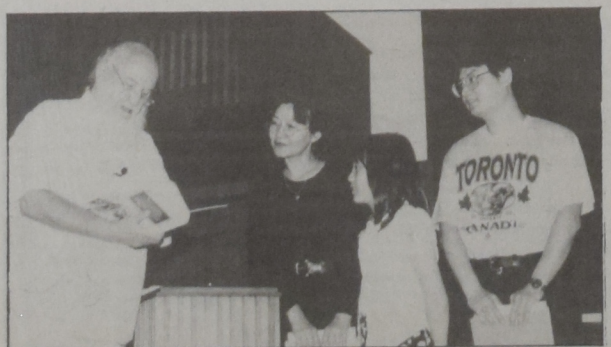
At first, Aren did not talk about God, Ingrid recalls. He focused more on helping her and her family apply for immigration. But she soon saw God in him. "I saw his life, I read his story and I saw the power of God in him," she says.

She agreed to attend Bible study a few years ago, but argued a lot. Aren remembers that, too. "She was very difficult at first," he says with a chuckle. "But God spoke to her." Ingrid now thinks that at that time she was very proud. God showed her that humility is a better way.

She also read a book in Canada about Buddhism and that opened her eyes to her own religion. "In China we think that there are many gods in Buddhism," she says. She refers to the many images and sacred places one can visit. Even an open fireplace has religious significance. But the book she read pointed out to her that Buddhism does not teach a personal God, or personal gods, for that matter. Buddhists believe in Fate or Destiny.

This made Ingrid reflect on the presence of "so many amazing things in the world," especially human life as compared to animal life. How could that be the result of some blind force? she wondered. In China she had been taught evolution. That no longer made sense to her.

Buddhists believe they must save themselves by being good, she says. But Aren told her that God did not expect her to live a perfect life in order to be saved. And through Aren she heard about Jesus, who says that he is the *only* way to God and to salvation.



Aren presents a children's Bible to Marina.

Historical evidence

How did she come to trust this Jesus?

What helped her was knowing that Jesus was actually a historical person. He had existed in real life. He had had disciples, and they all thought that he was a good man. He had healed many people. "Now, if this good man says he is God and it turns out he is *not* God, then he is a liar and cannot be a good man," she says, applying an argument that C.S. Lewis was fond of using.

Yet Ingrid began to believe more and more that Jesus *was* a good man. She read what he had taught, and she believed that his wisdom was not human wisdom, but wisdom from heaven.

At first, Christians had been trying to prove to her from the Bible that Jesus was God. They were pointing to a number of texts that declared Jesus to be the Son of God. But that did not convince Ingrid.

"I can write a book, too, and prove anything," she says. Ingrid needed the actual testimony of people who had known Jesus and the actual life of Christians who incorporated Jesus' teachings to convince her.

A bold confession

Ingrid's husband, Edward, and daughter, Marina, joined Ingrid in Canada in April 1996. Ingrid's transformation was new to them, and Edward still needs time to absorb it all. He was not prepared to be baptized at this time, but promised to support Ingrid and Marina in their new life in Christ.

The question of Ingrid's baptism had come up earlier, but Aren was advised by another pastor that he should wait. Geisterfer is a little frustrated with what he sees as a Christian Reformed tendency to delay baptism. He has found that other churches immediately baptize persons after he was used by God to lead them to Christ. Is that why he chose to preach on the Ethiopian eunuch, who considered the presence of a body of water the end of all excuses not to be baptized on the spot?

Didn't give up

But Ingrid did not give up. Before moving to Vancouver the end of June, she wanted to be baptized by the man who had led her to Christ. (Once they are settled in on the West Coast, where a job with Motorola Canada Ltd. awaits Ingrid, the family hopes to worship at Immanuel Christian Reformed Church, a Chinese congregation in Richmond, B.C.)

And so it came to pass that on June 21, the first day of summer in the northern hemisphere, Aren Geisterfer preached on how God made himself visible in Jesus, that he is a very personal God, and that Christians don't worship ideas. God cares for people who are lost as he sent Philip to talk to the eunuch about the meaning of Isaiah 53: 7,8, said Aren.

The message was not lost upon the former-Buddhist-now-disciple-of-Jesus — Ying (Ingrid) Zhang. But before Aren preached on the theme "Faith in Jesus Christ leads us to the Way, the Truth and the Life," Aren asked Ingrid the question: "Do you now wish to be baptized in the name of the triune God, and will you receive your baptism as a sign and seal that God accepts you in Christ, forgives all your sins, and incorporates you into his church?" Ingrid's answer rang clear and strong: "I do, with all my heart."

News Digest

Sunday soul food

CHICAGO — There is a longstanding tradition in African-American churches: after the preaching, singing and praying are over, everyone heads down to the church basement for Sunday dinner. Although not restricted to black churches, Sunday church dinners were refined by African-Americans in the rural South, says the *Chicago Tribune*. Often members spent all day in church, until the evening service.

"The church started out as the site of social activities in our communities," says Joyce White, who has just chronicled the history of Sunday church dinners in *Soul Food*. "The churches were our restaurants. We didn't have to worry about segregation or not feeling welcome."

Today, there is a kitchen and dining area in almost every black church in the U.S., says White.

Overzealous greyhound

ENGLAND — The greyhounds were pounding down the home stretch at a dog track in western England when one of them pulled a stunt fit for a video blooper show, reports the *Christian Science Monitor*. Cavecourt Blue was clearly going to come in last. But she did much more than that. After crossing the finish line, she kept right on going — off the track, through a security fence, out of the stadium, across the parking lot and into the distance. (Smart dog.) At least the search parties knew what to look for, though. When last seen, she was still wearing her bright orange racing jacket with No. 5 on the sides.

Crazy Cola

SIBERIA — When a local beverage company in the middle of Siberia introduced its own cola brand, the firm named it Crazy Cola. "Everyone knows it is a joke to go against Coca-Cola," said Yevgenia Kuznetsova, the president of Pikra, a beer and soft drink manufacturer. "So we called ours 'Crazy Cola' in order to laugh at ourselves." Even crazier, she added, is that Crazy Cola is showing a slight profit 18 months after it was introduced, the *Globe and Mail* reports.